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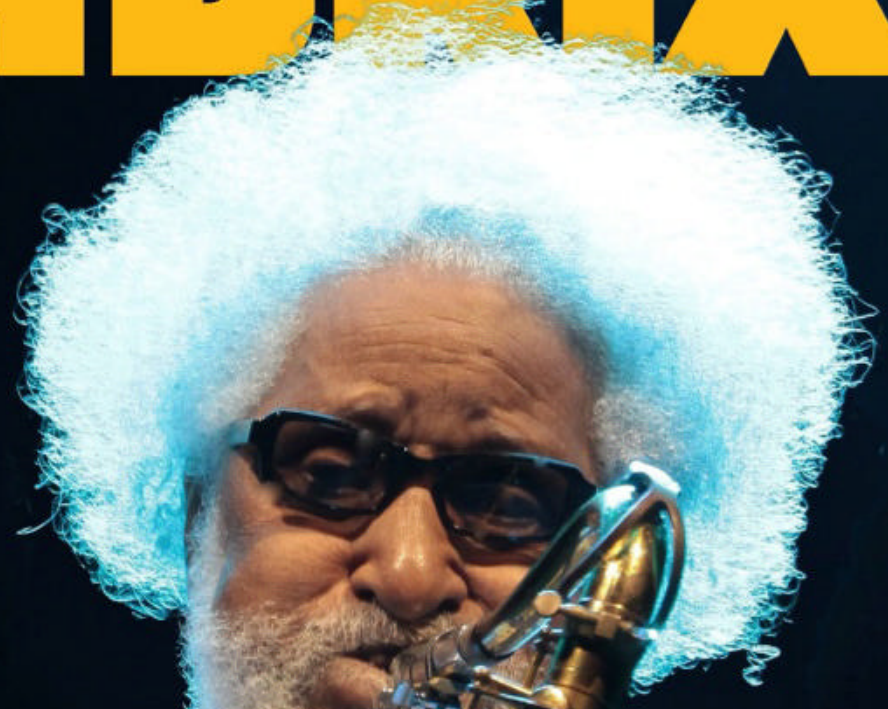

FESTIVALS of 2023

A COMPLETE GUIDE

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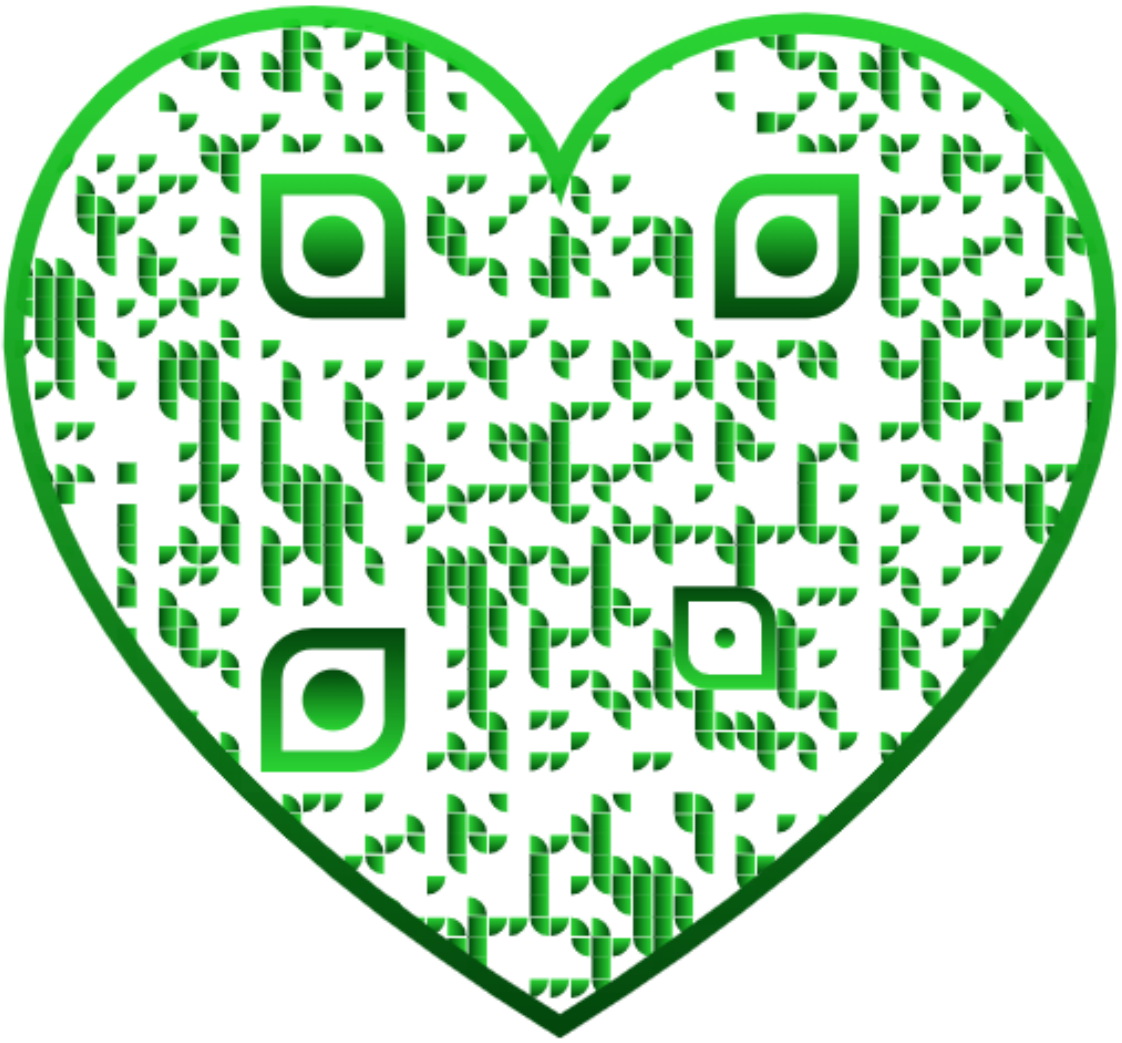

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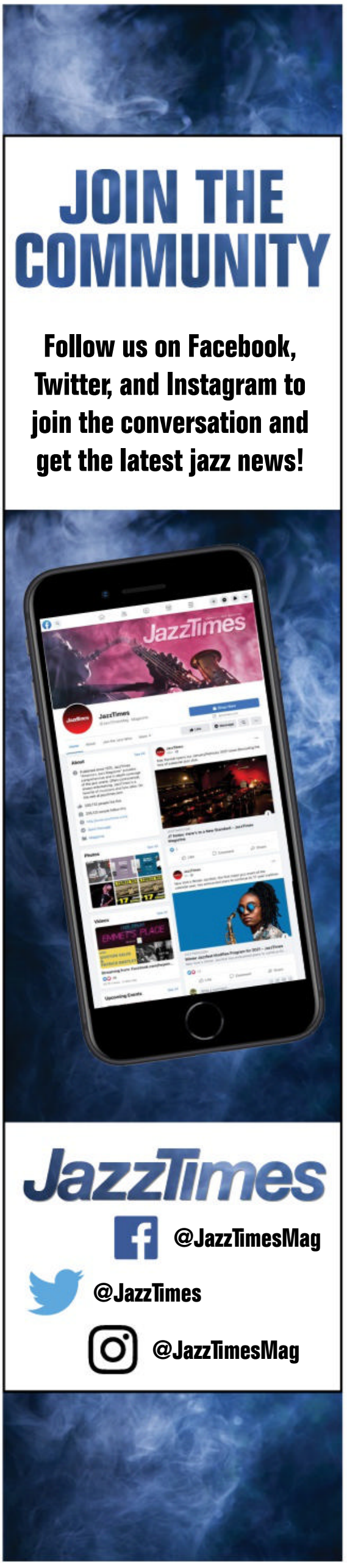

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Pardon Our Dust

Jazz is a living, breathing, ever-evolving art form—and so, as it turns out, is *JazzTimes*. Mac Randall stepped down from his role as editor-in-chief with the coming of the new year. We are sad to lose his deft helmsmanship of this magazine and wish him well in future endeavors.

As reviews editor, I was in the most viable position to step in and shepherd *JT* through this transitional period. (I'm only here for the interim, so let's none of us get too comfortable with me in this chair.) It's a challenging task, and there's a lot of improvisation involved—hey, it's jazz! I'm very proud of the results. However, sharp-eyed readers will notice that the bass theme that has traditionally defined our April issues is a far lower presence than usual. Instead, this month's theme is a bit of a mash-up, with bass as one of the threads, but festivals, those annual gatherings in celebration of this music, being the dominant one.

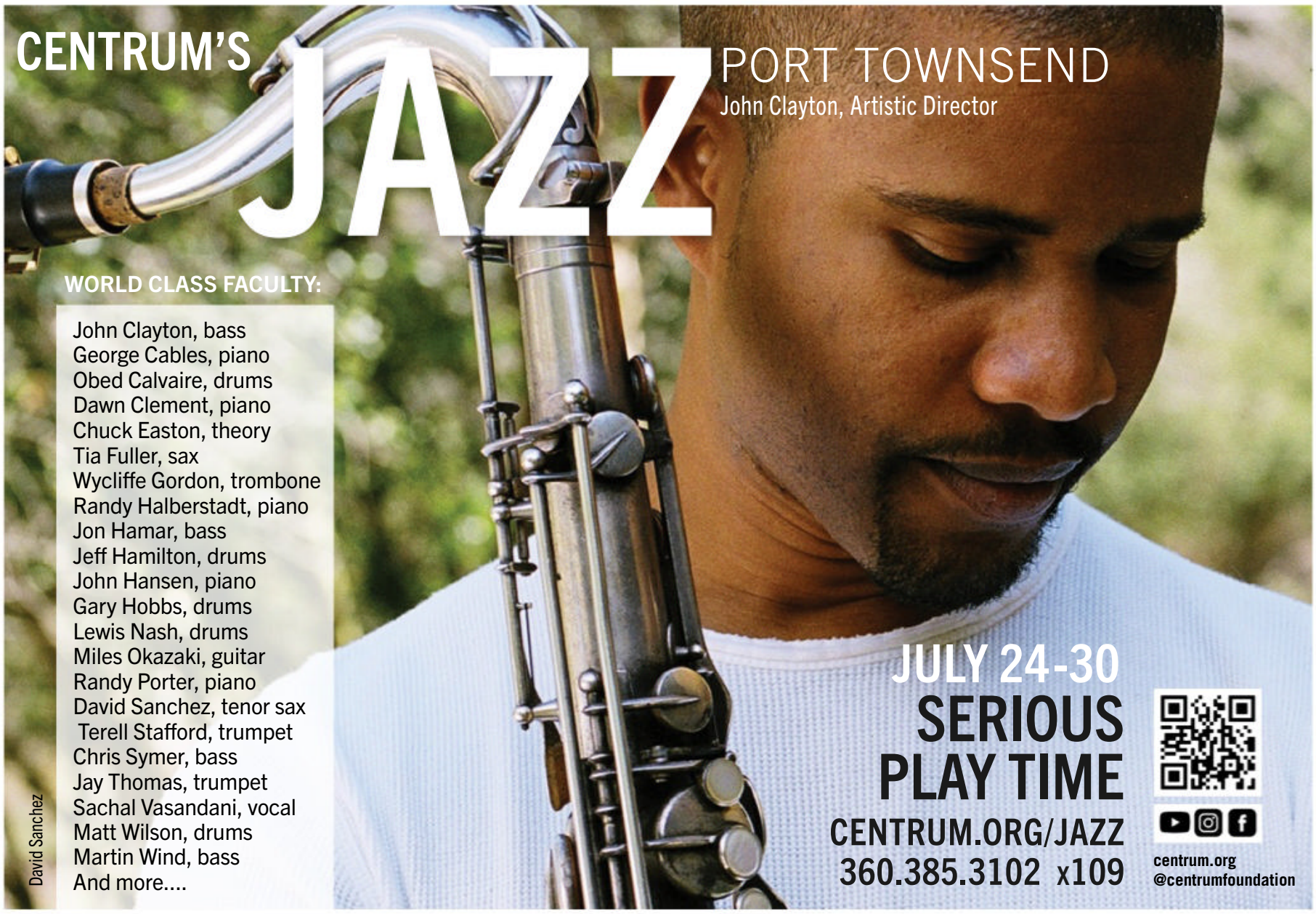
Which leads us to the indisputable good news of this issue: Our annual festival guide, included herein, is longer and more robust than it has been in several years. Many of the festivals that COVID-19 had forced into hiatuses or virtual-only programs are coming back in full force for 2023. In fact, even some of the fests that were previously declared dead have re-emerged like the proverbial phoenix. As this issue's cover star, Sonny Rollins, is fond of saying, "Jazz is a spirit. You can't kill a spirit." So it seems.

Part and parcel of that good news is that Umbria Jazz, the Italian summer festival that is one of the most acclaimed (which—take my word, folks—it merits) and influential in the world—has not only survived the pandemic, but every other obstacle that's come its way for the last half century. Ashley Kahn, a frequent presence at that festival in a variety of different roles, marks its 50th anniversary herein by way of a conversation with its founder and longtime artistic director Carlo Pagnotta. It's a piece that's less focused on the music itself and more on the nuts and bolts that make large-scale events like festivals happen. But those are important details, and they're details that audiences are often curious about and should be more aware of. A lot of work goes into those free concerts you see in city squares (or, in this case, piazzas), and Kahn gets to the bottom of it.

Of course, there are those other threads that are worthy of your time, too. Bass is still a strong one, and such figures as Israel Crosby, Linda Oh, and Joelle Leandre make their presence known in these pages. So do a pair of midwestern legends: Indianapolis's Wes Montgomery and Detroit's Tribe, both of whose legacies are examined.

Still, we must come back to Umbria Jazz and note how it's weathered the challenges of many decades in its 50-year history. *JazzTimes*, you'll recall, recently celebrated its own 50th birthday. We've weathered the challenges, too—and we plan to keep doing so.

—MICHAEL J. WEST



‘Why Not?’

JOËLLE LÉANDRE rocks on, freely

You ask, ‘Why’?” says Joëlle Léandre, 71, when asked about recording somewhere between 140 and 200 albums since 1981, with three times as many gigs under her belt. “I say, ‘Why not?’ I always say, ‘Why not?’ I never say, ‘No.’”

With one foot out the door from her home in Paris — en route to Switzerland and a series of live shows — the improvisational composer and contrabass player has no intention of ever slowing, ever. Along with releasing *J. LÉANDRE - C. TABORN - M. MANERI* with pianist Craig Taborn and violinist Mat Maneri this month on the Rogue Art label, she’s headed to New York for the 2023 Arts for Art Vision Festival, where she will be honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award on June 13.

“Being able to talk about myself and all the things that I have done in my 48 years of being on the road and in the studio is a thrill — and the throughline is that it is all free,” says Léandre. “My freedom, my ability to select, to choose only what I want to do in terms of invention — that is what has always been when it comes to my creation. Selection is important to me. Some mornings you want to wear red socks, sometimes yellow.”

Born in Aix-en-Provence, a “young, so young” Léandre started off in classical music but forever felt the lure of the freest of free jazz, a music she instantly associates with the United States. “At 19, I was at the American Center in Paris, seeing Rashied Ali, Steve Lacy, and the Art Ensemble of Chicago,” she says. “That sound was America for me. It was a beautiful shock.”

Léandre famously won so many honors for her piano, bass fingerings, and compositional skills in France in her youth that she was awarded a scholarship in Buffalo, New York, where she met and befriended composers such as John Cage, Giacinto Scelsi, and Morton Feldman. “I was in Buffalo to study with Feldman… I am a curious person with a classical music background, but everything that attracted me was about being different,” she says of recording works by Cage and Scelsi, as well as her eventual connections to — and recording with — legendary free guitarist Derek Bailey, saxophonist Anthony Braxton, bassist William Parker, and Maneri and Taborn. Their sense of freedom was Léandre’s freedom. Their shared sense of “life and jubilation” was available to her with every thrum and saw of her bass.

“I am always *called* to whatever it is I do as a bass player,” Léandre says before teasing about still having to tote her instrument and her kit bag along on a heavy cart with four wheels to this day. “My bass is my expression.”

Recalling a Greyhound bus trip from Buffalo to downtown New York in 1972, she laughed about who it was she first ran into when the bus doors opened. “It was Leroy Jenkins and Fred Hopkins,” she enthuses. “I was this young French lady having coffee with these men, and Hopkins was a bass player like me… the free jazz people enthralled me. Half of my culture — my time playing in New York, my time as visiting professor at Mills College in Oakland teaching improvisation — is in America and is free jazz. I was always attracted to jazz people.”

Then again, lest you stick too closely to a conversation on free jazz or linger too long on the work of someone like Cage (“Why ask me about Cage? Why? That dates my instrument, my vocabulary”), Léandre is quick to remind you that she played contemporary music for over a decade. This includes her time performing with Pierre Boulez’s Ensemble InterContemporain.

“Yes, I had my classical studies, blah-blah-blah, and yes, jazz–non-traditional jazz — but I was, and am, different too. So I immediately wanted to talk with these artists, be it composers, musicians, choreographers, and poets. It is a pure adventure. All of my life, I believed that I am a gypsy person, a nomade… I am subversive, a rebel.”

Whether thinking about the heights of her Lifetime Achievement Award at Vision Fest (“I am so appreciative”) or the squeaking, squawking, sawing Rogue Art trio recording with Maneri and Taborn, Léandre is simply the most pleased when creating music with those she can “vibe” with and be free.

“As many CDs as I have made, however many that actually is, it is not to make a little plastic disc, but rather the music,” says Léandre. “If the music is good, if I can make it with friends and protagonists, in trios, quartets, or quintets which work best with my level of improvisation… this music, this life, becomes so important. That which is not ‘*musique savant*’ or composed music — I hate that hierarchy — is what I want to play. I want to play sounds. I love to play sounds.

“Music is more than just playing well. It is more highly valued in Europe to be a composer than an improviser. That for me is boring. I am going to be 72, and I want to play important, creative, improvisational music forever.”

—A.D. AMOROSI

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The New Millennium's Harlem Rent Party Goes Global

EMMET COHEN reflects on his pandemic-triggered livestreams

When the New York City jazz scene — and much of the world — went into lockdown in March 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic spread, clubs closed, and tours were canceled. Many musicians had few income streams but were itching to play to sustain their chops and sanity. With little hint as to what it might become, pianist Emmet Cohen started livestreaming informal concerts, dubbed "Live From Emmet's Place," every Monday evening. It teamed his regular trio (bassist Russell Hall and drummer Kyle Poole) with different guest performers, all crammed into the living room of his Harlem apartment.

The livestreams didn't end with the lockdowns. With 103 episodes and about 150 featured musicians under his belt as of mid-January, the pianist took stock of the project while working on The Jazz Cruise.

Cohen, who turns 33 on May 25, said the biggest surprise was the way the community at large embraced his livestreaming. "I've always thought about why I play this music and what the reason is for traveling, playing, bringing music to people, whether it is myself or for others. It really brought into focus how important other people are to the music and what a community event it is," he said. "People want to listen to music *together* and experience it *together*. That's what's so special about the jazz clubs. 'Let's get together and hang out until 3 a.m. and talk about life and experience the music and see our lives through the music.' That's what it is really about."

The program had an immediate impact. "A lot of people who came in during the first year said, 'Well, I haven't played my instrument in eight months or played with people in eight months. This is so special.' It brought tears to their eyes," Cohen said. "The audience online could see and feel and react to that. It became this thing that was fulfilling on many levels: for the musicians, for supporting the trio and everything we did in our ecosystem in Harlem, the sound man, the video guy, some tech people behind the scenes, and so many musicians in our camp."

Featured guests ranged from traditionalists (Jon-Erik Kelso, Harry Allen, Lew Tabackin, Wycliffe Gordon) to edgier modernists (Benny Benack III, Frank Lacy, Nicholas Payton, Alexa Tarantino), with a spectrum of singers from Cyrille Aimee and Brianna Thomas to Allan Harris and the venerable Sheila Jordan, as well as tap dancer Michela Lerman. "This is the picture of New York we were able to paint with so many different musicians. For us to find common ground with each of those musicians was a beautiful thing that made it work," he said.

"Some episodes I have a bunch of young people; some I just have a few people come and sit in. We go out on a limb. We had to raise a lot of money to do this. A lot of people are sponsoring episodes for $3,000 or something like that, so we can hire someone like Paquito D'Rivera and pay him what he's worth. We've had a lot of different angles on the show, and the people have really supported it. They see that we work hard, and they want to support it."

"Live From Emmet's Place" was also the genesis for his newest recording, *Uptown in Orbit* (Mack Avenue), which teamed the trio with series regulars alto saxophonist Patrick Bartley and trumpeter Sean Jones. They delved into a Harlem Renaissance classic, Willie "The Lion" Smith's "Finger Buster," a bit of Duke Ellington and Cedar Walton, and several Cohen originals that stretched from his love of stride piano to more modern styles.

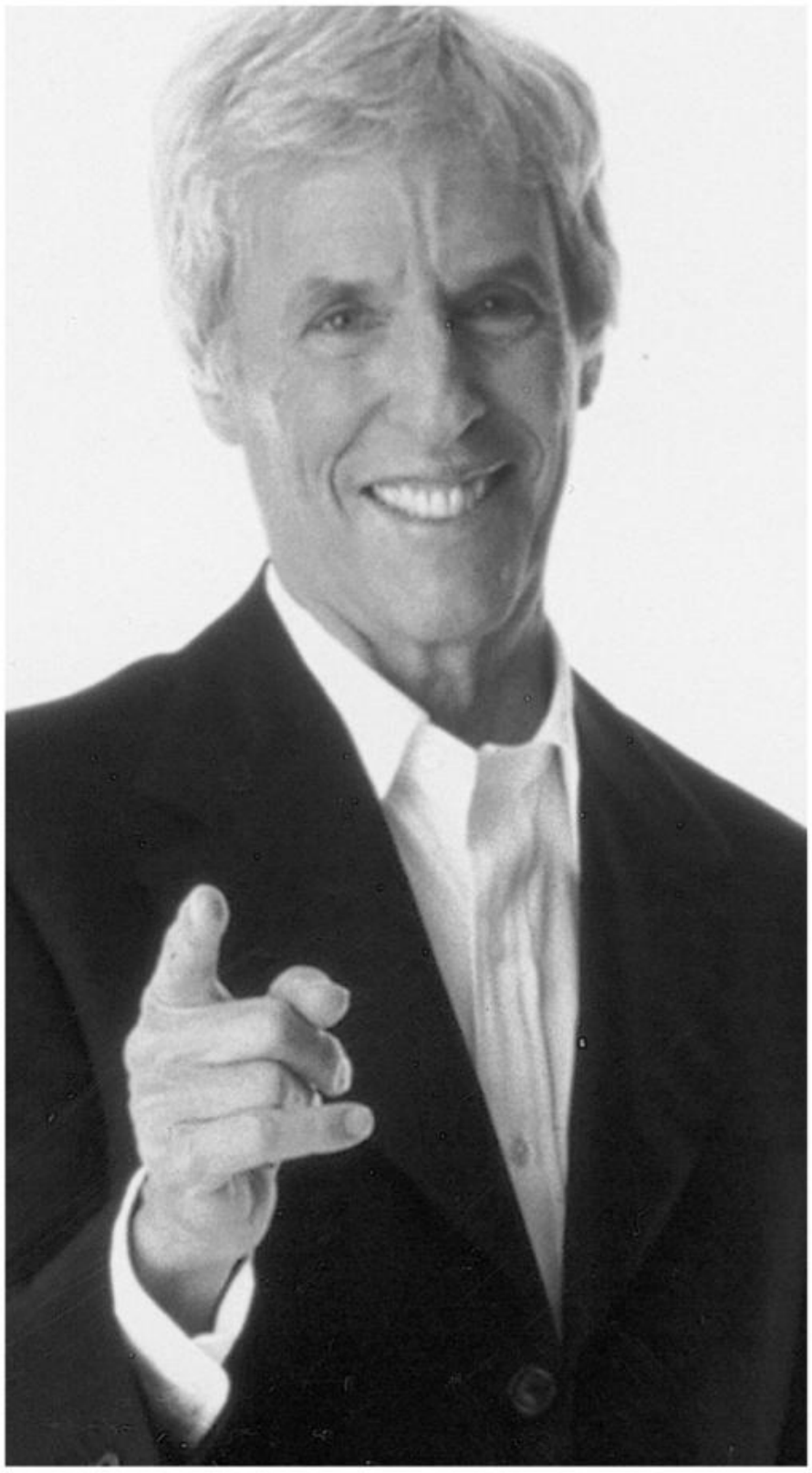
"I've become a completely different musician in the past three years just getting a little piece of every artist who has come in: what tunes they like to play, what their concept is," Cohen said. "I'm not trying to do anything besides have a moment with whatever guests we may have, where we can find that common ground and just do something meaningful.

"It was a Harlem rent party in which I invited everyone in the world into my living room. I didn't know it was going to be that, with so many links to history, and that it would become meaningful for so many people."

Cohen said he is reducing the livestreams to once a month because of some neighbor complaints about the noise, as well as his "insane" touring schedule. (He was aboard the *Celebrity Millennium* for both The Jazz Cruise and the Blue Note at Sea of the following week; then, he was off on a major tour taking him to the Tucson Jazz Festival and the Mesa Performing Arts Center in Phoenix, before heading overseas for concerts in Thailand, Indonesia, and South Korea.) "I think it's a good way to keep it going," he says. "Re-run episodes from the past, bring in some other live gigs we're doing in other parts of the world, and keep the community going like that.

—KEN FRANCKLING

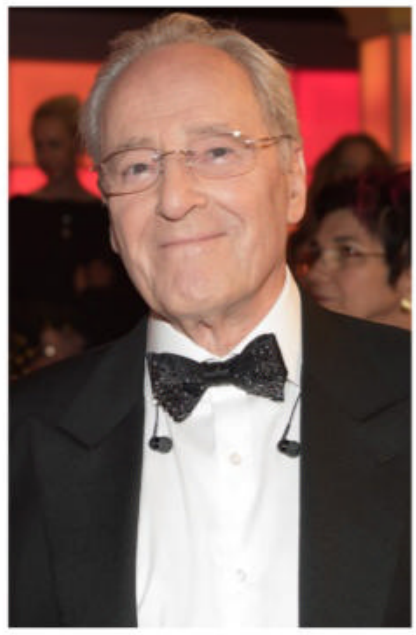
Farewells



Burt Bacharach, a legendary pop music composer and songwriter, died on February 8. He was 94. Not a jazz artist per se, Bacharach was a lover of jazz. His iconic pop hits ("Walk on By," "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head," "This Guy's In Love with You") were steeped in jazz harmony, and he worked with a wide variety of artists. Bacharach was a frequent source of both material and inspiration for jazz musicians; in particular, his theme for the 1966 film *Alfie* became associated with Sonny Rollins.

Rasul Siddik, a trumpeter and member of Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), died on January 16. He was 73. Born and raised in St. Louis, Siddik was a student of that city's Black Artists Group. When he moved to Chicago in the early '70s, he co-led the Black Artists Group of Chicago. A few years later, he moved to the West Coast, then to Europe, spending much of the next 40-plus years as part of Paris's free jazz community.

Richard Oesterreicher, an Austrian guitarist, pianist, and conductor, died on January 17. He was 90. Oesterreicher was best known in his home country as a longtime musical director for Austria in the Eurovision Song Contest, arranging and



Richard Oesterreicher

conducting the country's official contest entries. However, he was also a performer in his own right, a former leader of the ORF (Austrian State Radio) Big Band, and the leader for four decades of his own Richard Oesterreicher-Big-Band.

Renée Geyer, an Australian jazz and soul singer, died on January 17. He was 69. Self-described as "a white Hungarian Jew from Australia sounding like a 65-year-old Black man from Alabama," Geyer enjoyed a string of Australian pop hits in the 1970s and '80s. She spent several years in the U.S. as a respected session musician, though was unable to break through to popular success. When she returned to Australia in the mid-1990s, however, she was heralded as a living legend of both jazz and R&B vocals.

Butch Miles, a drummer who worked primarily with swing bands and vocalists, died on February 2. He was 78. After studying music at West Virginia State University, Miles toured beginning in the early 1970s with Mel Tormé, Count Basie, Buddy

Butch Miles

Rich, Dave Brubeck, Tony Bennett, and Ella Fitzgerald. He later settled in Austin, Texas, where he led the group Jazz Express.

Carol Sloane, a jazz singer who toiled for decades before finding late-career success, died January 23 at an assisted living facility in Stoneham, Massachusetts. She was 85. Cause of death was complications from

Carol Sloane

a stroke. Born Carol Morvan in Rhode Island, Sloane (a stage name) broke through in 1961 with a roof-raising performance at the Newport Jazz Festival. However, the rising tide of rock & roll meant that pop success passed her by, and by the end of the decade, she was working as a legal secretary and performing by night at a club in Raleigh, North Carolina. Recognition and success in the jazz world finally found Sloane in the 21st century. A documentary about her life and career, *Sloane: A Jazz Singer*, is currently in the works. ***JT***

CAROLE SLOANE: ALANNAHIGIAN

Luciana Álvarez conducts Las Hijas del Jazz

Vision, Talent, and Heart

Panama Jazz Festival celebrates its 20th edition

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHARONNE COHEN

Celebrating its 20th edition in January with verve, variety, and heart, the Panama Jazz Festival is a musical, cultural, and organizational wonder. It presented a plethora of musical, educational, and cultural offerings, with stellar performances by an impressive roster of local and international artists. Maintaining its strong focus on music education and cultural exchange, the festival is supported by a dedicated, highly competent team, including hundreds of volunteers and leadership that advocates for the integration and empowerment of women. It was a tremendous success that seemed to have a profound impact on each and every participant: musicians, staff, and audiences.

Back in full force after a challenging 2022 edition heavily impacted by COVID-19, the six-day event (January 16-21) featured venerated Cuban pianist Chucho Valdés, now 81; vocalist Catherine Russell, daughter of Panamanian jazz pioneer Luis Russell; Children of The Light, the supergroup of Danilo Pérez, John Patitucci, and Brian Blade; the intriguing Global Jazz Womxn, and much more—over 100 events, drawing 40,000+ people.

The festival is the largest cultural event in the region. It was founded in 2003 by renowned Panamanian pianist-humanitarian-educator-activist Pérez and his wife, Chilean saxophonist-educator-music therapy advocate Patricia Zárate (who serves as the festival's executive director) with the mission of inspiring, educating, and building a better future for individuals and communities through jazz. Music education and outreach are paramount concerns, with the festival offering five full days of clinics, master classes, and symposia at the City of Knowledge (a decommissioned U.S. Air Force base formerly known as Fort Clayton). Scholarships totaling approximately $50,000 were awarded to outstanding students for studies at Berklee College of Music and New England Conservatory, offering opportunities for growth and learning.

Also of prime importance is Panama itself. "The history of jazz would be incomplete without Panamanian artists," stated Pérez at the festival's opening, mentioning Billy Cobham, Alex Blake, and Rubén Blades, and announcing Luis Russell—an influential pianist, composer, and bandleader who was Louis Armstrong's longtime musical director—as this edition's honoree. Russell was the subject of master classes, including one in which the Luis Russell Collective focused on two of his compositions: "Come Back Sweet Papa," recorded by Armstrong, and the yet-unreleased "Bocas del Toro." Russell's daughter, vocalist Catherine Russell, delighted the audience as she performed this song at her Anayansi Theater concert with singular flair.

Pérez repeated the motto "más mujeres, mejor país" — more women, better country — throughout the week, often as a call-and-response with the audience. Its meaning became more apparent as the festival and its program unfolded, revealing formidable female talent and leadership. "In my opinion, more women would equal a better country. We've worked extensively to include

Afrodisíaco

Luis Russell Collective

Solinka & Las Hijas del Jazz

Danilo Pérez, Erika Ender, John Patitucci, Brian Blade

Danilo Pérez and Global Jazz Womxn. L to R: Jas Kayser, Luciana G. Álvarez, Ciara Moser, Pérez, Patricia Zárate Pérez, Lihi Haruvi.

more women in positions of power at the Danilo Pérez Foundation and the Panama Jazz Festival," Pérez explained to *JT*, noting that the professional team currently comprises 70% women and 30% men.

The highly skilled Global Jazz Womxn ensemble offered an opportunity to discover up-and-coming female jazz artists from around the world. Founded and led by Zárate, this captivating group includes gifted students, faculty, and alumni of the Berklee Global Jazz Institute in presenting original music and arrangements by female and nonbinary artists. Alongside musical collaboration, they also hold master classes on women's issues in jazz and conversations "about patriarchy and other topics that interest us," Zárate shared.

Global Jazz Womxn also played with the ambitious all-female, 30-piece big band Hijas D'el Jazz at the Ateneo Theater. This multigenerational project promotes the advancement of girls and women through musical, educational, and social exchange. Under Aleida Duartes' executive direction and Zárate's musical direction, the evening offered many of the young artists an opportunity to shine and featured a surprise performance by magnetic Panamanian octogenarian Solinka. The packed theater and the audience's strong reception testified to the level of musicianship and space that exists for such a female-led, all-female big band.

Displaying palpable chemistry and brotherhood, a sold-out concert by the powerhouse trio of Pérez, Patitucci, and Blade (three-fourths of the extraordinary Wayne Shorter Quartet) was another highlight. Panamanian-American singer Erika Ender opened the evening in an elegant duet with Pérez on piano, singing beloved Latin treasures. As the trio took the stage, Pérez dedicated the concert to Wayne Shorter, whose last Quartet performance was on that same stage. Imaginative and fearless, the three delved into Pérez's "Suite for the Americas," "Beloved (for Toni Morrison)" by Kurt Elling, and Patitucci's meditative "Our Story," opening with an electric bass solo equal parts mastery and tenderness.

Among the most memorable performances was the electrifying Afrodisíaco at Villa Augustino, an outdoor venue located in the Old Quarter (where nightly jam sessions took place). Playing infectious Panamanian folk-fusion music, the band is centered around various drums, representing the sound of freedom and offering sociopolitical commentary. With the addition of guitars, effects, and spoken word delivered by the band's two female vocalists and a surprise guest — a smoldering Zárate — the high-energy performance left the audience in exceptionally high spirits.

A well-attended midday performance by the rousing Danilo Pérez Foundation Ensemble at the City of Knowledge came with an unexpected treat: Illustrious Panamanian drummer Cobham sat in on the last tune, Herbie Hancock's "Cantaloupe Island," surprising and delighting everyone in attendance.

Closing festivities took place at the quadrangle of the City of Knowledge, attended by a massive audience of about 30,000 music lovers who gathered for a full program of free shows. The final concert by Grammy-winning Puerto Rican salsa king Gilberto Santa Rosa Cortés had the audience singing and dancing. Maestro Pérez sat in for a special rendition of the emotive ballad "Para Vivir," the two displaying a sophisticated musical interplay that was the perfect ending to this uplifting and impactful edition.

"We're here to raise the vibration," said Pérez, closing out the festival. And that most certainly happened. ***JT***

Israel Crosby (far right) with Benny Goodman, Gene Krupa, Teddy Wilson, and others in 1952.

Beyond Ahmad

A look at Israel Crosby's innovative career

BY MARK STRYKER

Bassist Israel Crosby is best known for the seven prolific years he spent with the landmark Ahmad Jamal Trio from 1954-62. His bass lines on classics such as "But Not for Me," "Poinciana," and, well, everything else he recorded with Jamal are ingenious masterpieces of melodic invention, harmonic direction, swinging propulsion, and subtle orchestration.

But Crosby deserves his spot in the pantheon for more than his tenure with Jamal. He enjoyed a significant if often overlooked career as an innovator through the 1930s and 1940s, and his tragically brief, post-Jamal musical life was heading in intriguing directions when he died from a heart condition at 43 in August 1962.

Put it this way: If all you know is Crosby with Jamal, then you don't know the full measure of his contributions.

Jimmy Blanton remains the Big Bang of the jazz bass, the virtuoso who more than anyone else elevated the bass into a solo instrument with the Duke Ellington Orchestra from 1939-'41. Blanton, however, did not come out of nowhere. Among the bassists pushing the instrument forward in the 1930s were Wellman Braud, Walter Page, Milt Hinton, and Billy Taylor Sr. Crosby was the most progressive of them all in terms of sound, chops, phrasing, imagination, intonation, and time feel.

Blanton, who died in 1942 of tuberculosis at age 23, was a once-in-a-generation genius. Though less of a comet, Crosby was his closest peer. "Had Israel Crosby received the presentation and major-label record distribution that Duke Ellington gave Jimmy Blanton, he might have been a primary influence in jazz bass playing during the late 1930s," bassist Bill Crow writes in the *Oxford Companion to Jazz* (2000).

Born in Chicago in 1919, Crosby started on trumpet at age 5, later taking up tuba and trombone and switching to bass at 15 in 1934. Crosby took to his new instrument as prodigiously as the biblical David took to the sling. He made his first records in April 1935 with pianist-singer Charles LaVere. Crosby played one of the earliest bass solos on record on "Blues of Israel" with a Gene Krupa octet in November 1935.

Crosby's songful, four-bar introduction outlines a descending, stairstep melody for two bars that anticipates the

melodic fills he played with Jamal 20 years later. A string of eighth notes then swings like a horn while leaning expressively into blue notes. The track closes with a solo bass chorus. The glowing warmth of Crosby's sound, articulation, and freely conceived melodic and rhythmic phrasing—laying back on the beat, reaching up to a high F, and deploying ornamental triplets—are strikingly advanced for 1935. He was just 16.

Crosby's musicianship and versatility earned him steady work and recording opportunities in stylistically diverse bands large and small led by Fletcher Henderson, Cab Calloway, Albert Ammons, Chu Berry, Roy Eldridge, and Coleman Hawkins. The four sides with elegant pianist Teddy Wilson in March 1936 (Brunswick) are in a special class. The cream of the swing era is here, among them Eldridge, Berry, and Sid Catlett.

"If all you know is Crosby with Jamal, then you don't know the full measure of his contributions

While hard to hear the details in these vintage recordings, the bewitching swing and time feel of Crosby's walking lines seduces you instantly. He drives the band forward with a legato bounce at once relaxed and intense. He's locked into Wilson harmonically and merges seamlessly with Catlett's wide beat and textured dynamics. On "Blues in C-Sharp Minor," Crosby lays down a dark-roasted and mysterious repeating line (ostinato) with spot-on pitch. Though written by Wilson, the ostinato presages the vamps Crosby played with Jamal.

By 1941, when Crosby recorded with clarinetist Edmond Hall's unique celesta quartet (with Meade Lux Lewis on celesta and Charlie Christian on guitar), the bassist's technical fluidity had leapt forward. His attack is now more varied, his quarter note plumper, his walking lines more sophisticated. On "Jammin' in Four," a sprightly blues, he invents fanciful melodic shapes, especially during his walking solo.

Crosby increasingly casts his lines in smoother, stepwise movement, while also deploying larger intervals and reversing direction in surprising spots. He lands on non-chord tones in ways that create tension. It's also revealing to hear him expanding his language to match the nascent swing-to-bop conception of Christian's flowing improvisations.

Crosby only recorded once as a leader, in 1947, releasing four rare sides on Apollo that have never been reissued. An additional track, "Reboppin' for Red," wasn't released until 1986, misidentified on a Delmark label compilation CD, *Blues Around the Clock*. Crosby is the titular leader, fronting a Chicago outfit laying down early rhythm and blues with no bass solos. (Thanks to musician-collector Daniel Gugolz for confirming details of the two sides I haven't heard.)

Crosby's style continued evolving during his years with Jamal. He and drummer Vernel Fournier played creative roles in manifesting the pianist's conceptualism: his profound use of space, dramatic play of tension and release, sly distillation of big band conventions for three players. Anyone who hasn't explored Jamal's trio should start with the iconic *At the Pershing: But Not for Me* (Argo).

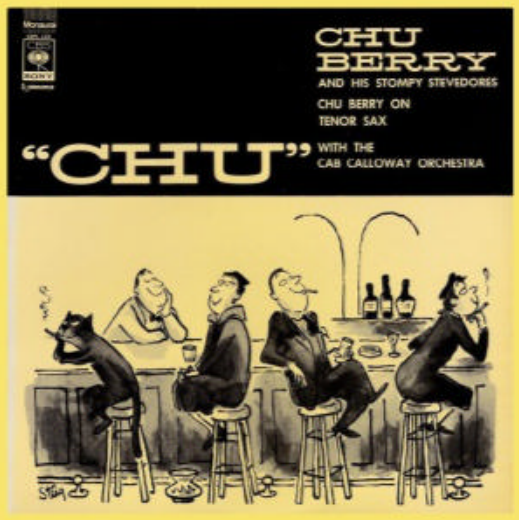
Crosby made four records in the seven months before his passing: with singer Lorez Alexandria, guitarist Herb Ellis, pianist George Shearing, and bassist Sam Jones, who played cello on three tracks with Crosby behind him. On Shearing's *Jazz Moments* (Capitol), with Fournier on drums, Crosby sounds tremendous, echoing his trademarks with Jamal like a dancing two-beat feel, witty melodic fills, and a swinging purr. He also solos more volubly on tracks like "What is This Thing Called Love."

On Jones' hard-boppish *Down Home* (Riverside), Crosby sounds as contemporary as anyone in the band on "Round Midnight," "O.P.," and "Falling in Love with Love." This was Crosby's last session, and like his first date 27 years earlier, it proved he was ready for anything. ***JT***

FURTHER LISTENING

Coleman Hawkins, *Keynote Recordings*
(1944)

Crosby is on hand for four of Hawk's best sides of the '40s, along with Teddy Wilson and Cozy Cole: "Flame Thrower," "Imagination," "Night and Day," "Cattin' at Keynote."



Chu Berry and his Stompy Stevedores *Chu*
(Variety, 1937)

Swing-era gems, reissued on Epic and Columbia, led by a tenor sax hero with Crosby in great early form and especially creative on "Too Marvelous for Words."

Benny Morton, *Blue Note Recordings*
(1945)

Even in the '40s, Blue Note gave us superb sonics, so Crosby's bass rings out loud and clear on these five sides with Morton, Barney Bigard, Ben Webster, and others.

Jon Cowherd

The pianist/organist is, as ever, doing his thing

BY A.D. AMOROSI

Say the name "Jon Cowherd" in elite jazz circles, and his acclaim is that of a towering, tender pianist, organist, and electronic keyboardist who's equally at ease in cross-genre exploration as he is with jazz greats. The foremost example is Joni Mitchell, with whom Cowherd played and produced the legendary songwriter's *Joni 75: A Birthday Celebration* project in 2018. (Relatedly, he played piano on Joni acolyte Brandi Carlile's concerts performing the Blue album in Los Angeles and New York.) He has additionally recorded with Lizz Wright, Norah Jones, Cassandra Wilson, and punk rocker-turned-lounge-lizard Iggy Pop.

Cowherd's notoriety is even greater in terms of his work with equally introspective drummer-bandleader Brian Blade, in whose Fellowship he's been since 1998's eponymous recording. Yet, while Blade's 2023-released *Lifecycles, Vols. 1-2: Now! and Forever More Honoring Bobby Hutcherson* find the drummer and keyboardist again united in abstract soul vibes, it is Cowherd's new trio album *Pride and Joy* (Le Coq)—again with Blade and friend-bassist John Patitucci—that most reminds you of this keyboardist and composer's finessed emotive clarity, genre-jumping glee, and innovative intensity. And rarity: Pride and Joy is only the Kentucky-raised, New Orleans-schooled New Yorker's third album as a bandleader.

"My parents are musicians, and there was a piano in the house by the time I was born," says Cowherd. "However, I was more interested in the trumpet and later French horn, so I didn't go very deep into the classical piano repertoire until I was in my 30s."

The French horn took Cowherd to Loyola University in New Orleans, where his devotion to classical brass eventually moved over to jazz piano. "That city and its musicians had a profound effect on me," he says. "I started composing while in school in New Orleans and wanted it—along with arranging—to be a part of my bag." He was still figuring out that career as a composer and arranger when the 18-year-old Blade stepped into the picture. "Brian was the first drummer who ever played anything that I wrote, so I was spoiled from the beginning," says Cowherd.

More than writing, though, playing was his heart's desire. When he graduated from Loyola, Cowherd moved to NYC to break into the jazz scene, but on his way fell into the funk/ska scene that was populated with musicians he had previously met in New Orleans. He also played gospel music at a church, met ever-more great musicians and producers, and began pursuing a master's degree at Manhattan School of Music. "I gradually started working on the NYC jazz scene," he recalls, "at places like Cleopatra's Needle, Smalls, Visiones, and Sweet Basil, gigging with fellow students and New York City musicians."

Those roads led back to Blade and the Fellowship, of which Cowherd was a founding member; to collaborations with Wright, bandleader George Gee, and trombonist Marshall Gilkes; and to his work across the genre spectrum with Pop, Mitchell, and Carlile. Under his own name, he released *Mercy* (with guitarist Bill Frisell,

COURTESY OF JON COWHERD

Patitucci, and Blade) in 2013; *Gateway*, a vinyl-only release featuring Blade, guitarist Steve Cardenas, and bassist Tony Scherr, appeared in 2017.

It was Patitucci, whom Cowherd calls "a brother," whose recommendation brought the keyboardist to the attention of the Las Vegas-based Le Coq Records. "When I asked what direction I should go in, Le Coq told me to do me, do my thing," says Cowherd. "So, I wrote my thing, Pride and Joy, without boundaries. And what I was doing didn't have to be a classic jazz sound, it could be modern, it could be whatever it needed to be."

What his "thing" is, according to Cowherd, depends on the song, the moment. The song could be "Wreckless Heart" by Glen Hansard, on which he plays piano, or Norah Jones' "Flipside," on which he simmers on the Hammond B3. Or moody compositions that Cowherd penned for Blade, such as "Down River" and "Landmarks." Whether playing or writing, Cowherd lives in service to melody and vibe. "When it comes to me, I put my own thing on it, my own spin."

The familial vibe of Le Coq feels right for Cowherd. Family is something that he has been lucky enough to have in the music, whether on a new label through which he's been given many shots at writing, playing, and arranging (on five albums, including Andy James' *Rhythm in New York* and an upcoming Marvin Gaye project) or in working alongside his favorite drummer.

"The Fellowship has had the same lineup since 1997, pretty much, and I feel great knowing that we're going to be making music as such for many years to come," he says. "And Le Coq is giving me these great opportunities to write and play as well as release my own new music — it's a family filled with individual talents and ideas."

> ***"What I was doing didn't have to be a classic jazz sound, it could be whatever it needed to be."***

Talking about this new "trio thing" with Blade and Patitucci, with special guests such as saxophonist Chris Potter and percussionist Alex Acuña, Cowherd states that *Pride and Joy* is but a continued fruiting of the Fellowship's family tree: "An extension of everything we've ever done from the start," he says, laughing. "[Brian and I] used to get together and jam as a duo when we were in school. And that's what we've also done as a trio when working with Patitucci. That's what *Pride and Joy* is, only with me as the leader: fresh and with different instrumentation and a different approach to melody. *Pride and Joy* is an extension of the friendship, our love of playing together." ***JT***

RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Brian Blade, *Lifeline*
(Blue Note, 1998)

Marcus Strickland, *Subway Suite 2nd Movement*
(Bandcamp, 2007)

Jon Cowherd, *Mercy*
(ArtistShare, 2013)

Joni Mitchell, *Joni 75: A Birthday Celebration*
(Decca, 2019)

A Tribe Called Jazz

How Wendell Harrison and Phil Ranelin's homemade Detroit operation became a jazz legend

By Veronica Johnson

Saxophonist Wendell Harrison, 80, and trombonist Phil Ranelin, 83, longtime friends and cofounders of the renowned jazz collective Tribe, still have the drive and work ethic of jazz musicians more than half their age. On a cold Monday evening in January, Harrison was preparing for a live show at the Detroit Institute of Arts, a commissioned work for the nonprofit organization Fighting for the Children featuring a rhythm section, horn sections, and a string orchestra of young musicians. Harrison spent most of that day performing and promoting the concert at local radio station WDET. The rest of his week consisted of rehearsals for the show and publicizing the concert on social media. "I'm tired as hell," Harrison says, half-jokingly.

Ranelin, based in Indianapolis, is bouncing back from a stroke, but he hasn't let that hinder him from putting the finishing touches on live recordings he's working to release this spring. The albums comprise music he performed with his quartet after moving to L.A. in the late '70s. "I'm hoping getting these records out will inspire me to get back on the horn," says Ranelin.

Harrison and Ranelin have a long-running history of and passion for preserving their music and feeding it to the public. Their do-it-yourself philosophy developed in the 1960s and was the impetus for the formation of Tribe: a music collective, publication, and record label they built in 1971. They released several records on the label with fellow Detroiters trumpeter Marcus Belgrave and pianist Harold McKinney and published a magazine that had an impressive national following. In recent years, Tribe has experienced a resurgence; the albums, and many issues of the magazine, have been reissued in Europe and Japan.

"It's really prolific," says Harrison. "This is like a life jacket for me because it's my Social Security — it's survival money. To have this kind of rebound at 80 years old is a blessing."

BUILDING THE TRIBE

Long before Tribe became a Detroit powerhouse, Harrison and Ranelin had built sound reputations. Harrison studied for years with pianist and Detroiter Barry Harris, then moved to New York in the 1960s, where he worked with the legendary guitarist Grant Green, vocalist Eddie Jefferson, and pianist-bandleader Sun Ra. Harrison also spent time in California and toured with saxophonist Hank Crawford. While on the road, he crossed paths with Ranelin at a club in Indianapolis.

Ranelin worked with such fellow Indy players as trumpeter Freddie Hubbard and guitarist Wes Montgomery. In the '60s, he moved to Detroit to work as a session player with Motown Records. He reunited with Harrison when they both got jobs working as music educators for Metro Arts, a multidisciplinary arts complex for youth that McKinney was heading at the time.

"When Wendell and I were working at Metro Arts, we were talking one day, and we realized we had a lot of the same dreams, like recording our own music, forming a band, and things like that. And that's how we hooked up and started Tribe," said Ranelin.

Harrison was planning to go back to New York but decided instead to stay in Detroit for a while and worked with Ranelin to start producing and promoting concerts at Detroit Institute of Arts. He learned how to promote concerts from a friend of his mother's, who was promoting gospel groups. As part of his and Ranelin's

efforts, they assembled concert program booklets featuring advertisements from local businesses. These program booklets later evolved into *Tribe* magazine.

The magazine was edited by writer Herb Boyd and featured articles from his students at Wayne State University, who wrote about abortion, politics, transportation, and other issues of importance to the Black community. The magazine landed national distribution and corporate ads from big automotive companies such as Ford Motor Company and Chrysler.

The success of the magazine allowed Tribe to fund not only the concerts and promotional materials but also recording sessions. The group was thus able to create such classic recordings as Harrison and Ranelin's *A Message from the Tribe* (1972, with extended editions released in 1973 and 1974), Harrison's *An Evening with the Devil* (1973), Belgrave's *Gemini II*, Ranelin's *The Time Is Now!*, and McKinney's *Voices and Rhythms Of The Creative Profile* (all from 1974).

"Everybody was recording on each other's album, which gave us a sound and gave the label an identity, which was Afrocentric funk on the bottom, and jazz on the top," says Harrison. The same kind of politically conscience topics that were addressed in the magazine are what Tribe focused on in its music: police brutality, racism, and civil rights. *An Evening with the Devil*, for instance, has a track called "Mary Had An Abortion," alluding to the issue of women's reproductive rights in the 1970s.

TRIBAL SUCCESSES AND DIFFICULTIES

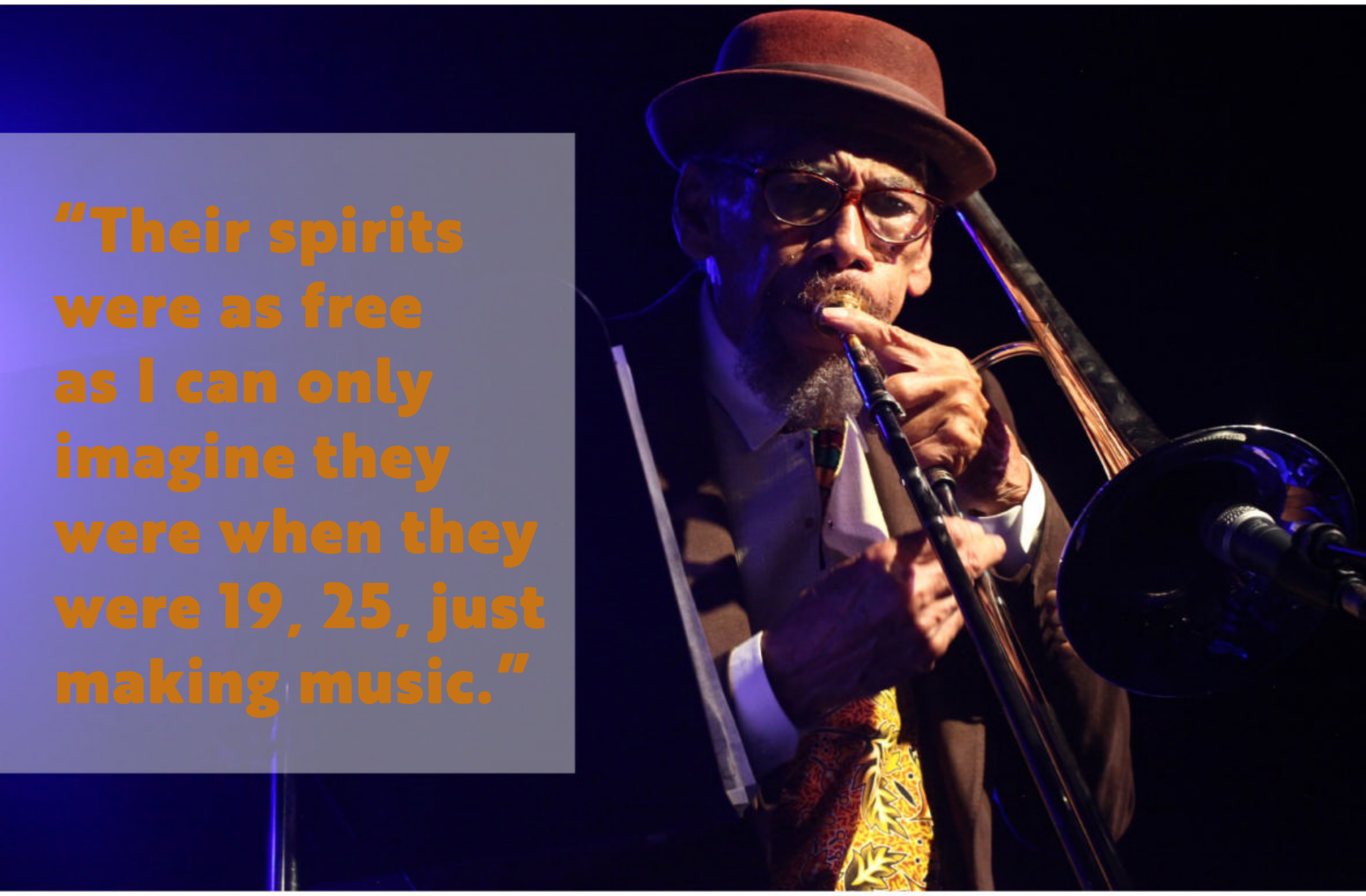
Challenges surfaced as Tribe grew, and the musicians used the label to push their independent projects. Every member of Tribe was also a bandleader in their own right, so it was a sacrifice for the group to play together when they wanted to play their own music and lead their own bands.

"All of us had our own records out and were trying to get our own gigs. But we had to contain and discipline ourselves, and said we would come together for a reason," says Harrison. "When we came together, we got more money as Tribe members because we had all these names playing together."

The promotional strategies and business acumen that Tribe accumulated through its multiple ventures was a learning experience for the group and helped them to understand the ins and outs of how a record label worked. "We were recording for these major labels, but we didn't really know anything about the overall business. We knew how to play music, we knew how to produce, but we really didn't know anything about marketing and secondary markets," Harrison says.

He and Ranelin worked with 15 distributors around the United States to get Tribe's music to the masses. The label fit the mold for the small, independent distributors who didn't want to work for corporate labels. Tribe itself also served as a distribution outlet, issuing records by bassist Ron Brooks and drummer Doug Hammond that allowed the musicians to retain control of their music from a marketing and creative standpoint.

Tribe magazine folded in 1977 due to a number of factors. In particular, Harrison was increasingly disinterested in publishing, preferring to focus on creating music instead of pushing the magazine forward. That same year, Ranelin also left for L.A. after receiving an offer to tour with Hubbard. The members of Tribe would continue to perform as a group off and on up until the deaths of McKinney (2001) and Belgrave (2015). The label also slowed down business



quite a bit after the magazine folded in the late ’70s, but Harrison continues to issue records on the Tribe label from time to time; his latest, 2021’s *Get Up Off Your Knees*, bore the Tribe imprint.

KEEPING THE TRIBE ALIVE

What has truly kept the Tribe collective relevant and alive into the 21st century, however, are the reissues by record labels overseas, which began in 1990 and continue to this day. The most recent such package is from the Japanese label P-Vine. Titled *A Message from the Tribe Box Set*, it features all three editions of their inaugural record release and all 17 of the issues of *Tribe* magazine that were published during the 1970s.

Harrison and Ranelin also have a recent recording available on the Jazz is Dead label (*Jazz is Dead 016*). They performed a live concert and recorded the album in L.A. with musicians and JID cofounders Adrian Younge and Ali Shaheed Muhammad in early 2020. The Jazz is Dead records focus on bringing a different legend from the past to the forefront and highlighting their deep contributions to jazz and popular music. The label wanted to record Tribe as a way of celebrating the group’s continued dedication to remaining independent and producing jazz music. Muhammad and Younge crafted new material that celebrates the lasting impact of the group.

“When Phil was playing these bass lines on his trombone and was really devoted to that funk timing, on the one, all I could think was that this is the epitome of what we’re doing with Jazz Is Dead. We’re digging into the past, in the moment of the present, for the future,” said Muhammad in a press release. “Their spirits were as free as I can only imagine they were when they were 19, 25, just making music. It’s fun to be in the room with people like that because it proves that there are no barriers when you really allow your knowledge and the energy that you’re getting from other people to shine and make something really special.”

The work that Tribe started 50 years ago has continued on not only through Harrison and Ranelin but also through the Detroit jazz musicians they have mentored throughout the years.

In 1978, Harrison and McKinney founded Rebirth Inc., a recording label, production company, and nonprofit organization whose mission is to educate the youth and the greater community about jazz through workshops and concert presentations throughout the Midwest and beyond. For years, Harrison and his wife, pianist Pamela Wise, have been going into schools throughout metro Detroit and teaching students about music as well as putting on performances in the schools.

Detroiter Marion Hayden, an internationally renowned jazz bassist and cofounder of the female ensemble Straight Ahead, credits members of Tribe with inspiring her to become a musician. Hayden, like many now-successful Detroit-based musicians, was a part of Metro Arts when Harrison, Belgrave, McKinney, and Ranelin were teachers there. She recalls them teaching her the basics of musicianship and challenging all their students to increase their skills and rise to the occasion of the music they were presenting. Hayden has performed often with the members of Tribe.

“Wendell and Marcus in particular were really very willing to put younger folks like me on the stand that gave us opportunities

to actually perform professionally," Hayden says. "My first professional gig was actually with Wendell when I was probably about 14 or 15 years old."

She regards many lessons from Tribe as the foundation for how current Detroit artists conduct themselves when it comes to business. One of them is the idea that music can be decentralized. "They were able to do these things outside of places where we think of as the main centers for music, like New York and L.A., but everything does not have to go on in those particular centers, and there are some really great ways that one can be expressive. You can bring a lot of great ideas to fruition in places other than the coasts."

Another lesson learned that Hayden has used in her own career is having an independent mindset when it comes to producing your own work. She says that Tribe really set a blueprint for how independent artists function in Detroit, which continues to play out within the community even now.

"If they had a project they wanted to do, they would try to get a grant for it, but that was not going to be what stood between them and doing that project," she says. "The project was going to get done regardless because it was a project that held some intellectual and creative curiosity for them. And as far as I'm concerned, those are lessons that young people can learn right now."

Trunino Lowe is another one of Harrison's protégés and an extension of the Tribe legacy. He first met Harrison as a middle school student and then reconnected with him in high school. He has since gone on to lead his own band, performs regularly at Detroit jazz clubs, and was on Harrison's *Get Up Off Your Knees*.

"Wendell saved my life musically," Lowe says. "One day he called me to do this gig, and we started playing tunes, and I wasn't understanding. He stopped the whole band just to chew me out. I don't know how to describe the way. It wasn't harsh, but it wasn't pleasant either. The thing about Wendell that I always appreciated was he would tell you what's not working, and he won't lead you astray. He'll work with you and try to help you figure it out because he cares."

The influence that Tribe has brought to bear on the younger generation also hasn't gone unnoticed by Harrison and Ranelin. "I'm very proud of the impact we have had," said Ranelin. "Young people come up to me and say how much I have inspired them, and not only musicians but the fans. It really warms my heart that people of all races and ages were affected by our music."

Wendell affirms that a lot of the Detroit musicians were influenced and/or educated by Tribe. "We always taught jazz. That is our legacy. We are educators, we have to pass it on."

In terms of what's next for the musicians, they don't plan to slow down any time soon. They are continuing to reissue their music to labels overseas and also have plans to set up a tour in Europe and Japan to further promote all the albums that have been reissued in those countries. Harrison also wants to get more involved in producing films through his Rebirth company.

"Time is running out; I'm not going to live forever," he says with good humor. "You have to keep discovering stuff. If you are going to be on this earth, I learned that you have to struggle. If you are passive, you are not going to last that long." ***JT***

Getting It Right

Wes Montgomery's centennial and a debut for the ages

By Colin Fleming

IF you were a jazz guitarist in the late 1950s, you contended with a shadow that had been in place for the better of two decades. That shadow belonged to Charlie Christian, a player who innovated on the instrument as no one else had either before or since.

Christian died in early March 1942, aged twenty-five. He didn't leave us with a lot, in terms of an expansive body of work. His official corpus — and the informal cuts made at Minton's Playhouse in Harlem — counted for much, but no player had come along and followed him in such a way as to enter the ranks of Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Art Tatum, and Jimmy Blanton: the inner circle Hall of Famers of instrumental brilliance.

Someone else was getting ready to, though. He was taking his time, making sure that his chops and his art were in order. That someone was John Leslie "Wes" Montgomery, born in Indianapolis on March 6, 1923 — his birth date and Christian's death date missing each other by four days — and then charging into the jazz stratosphere in 1959, with the release of his first album, *The Wes Montgomery Trio*, on Riverside Records.

Montgomery was pushing forty when he hit the national scene. We don't see a lot of this in jazz, which is another reason why Montgomery's arrival — and his ascent — must have seemed so unlikely at the time. He wasn't there, and then he was.

Jazz artists at the time were a lot like baseball players. They tended to peak in their twenties — often enough their early twenties — and if they didn't die young, they nonetheless were artists that became most associated with their earlier offerings. Rare was an individual who kept it going, and going, and going. Even the best of us are not made — save in the rarest of instances — for the extended, consistent, high-level journeys of Duke Ellington and Hank Aaron.

Montgomervy himself wasn't. He would die in the same city in which he was born, in the summer of 1968, at the age of forty-five, having ceased to innovate some three years prior, though there were people at the time who knew his music who might not have otherwise. That's because Wes Montgomery the fretboard trailblazer had turned to a musical life of lite pop covers, if not outright Muzak, though that would be an uncharitable labeling.

Still, it's not through a cover of the Mamas and the Papas that you want to know Wes Montgomery, or how he deserves to be known and heard today.

“It’s as though Montgomery never plays a lick one single way, even as he’s playing it.”

THE GUITAR IN JAZZ wasn’t exactly the tuba in classical music — an instrument that would necessarily struggle to have an out-in-the-open presence as a star vehicle — but it did have somewhat of a utilitarian quality. It was a driving device. It kept a band on its beat: even the very best bands, as with Count Basie’s, perpetually molten in part because of the crucial services of Freddie Green. A guitarist provided focus, drive, and a rhythmic edge.

The stars of jazz, though, were the players and purveyors of different contraptions. Saxophones, trumpets, pianos. Even bass and drums — those fellow stalwarts of the rhythm section — commandeered a greater spotlight quotient than the relatively humble guitar.

Christian played his guitar as though it were a horn, but not a single horn; rather, all of the assorted horns at once, with a derring-do that over-made what anyone thought of as possible on the instrument. His technique was peerless. One heard Charlie Christian play jazz guitar, and the response was apt to resemble what occurred upon hearing Robert Johnson play blues guitar: How on earth does he do that? Great for Charlie Christian and his legacy, less great for anyone who wanted to produce a similar effect, but for different technical and artistic reasons.

Christian meant a lot to Montgomery himself. The latter had married in Indianapolis and was working as a welder in 1943 when he heard a Christian record played at a dance. The hook had been set. Montgomery bought his first guitar the next day. Having made the investment, and stirred to his core by Christian, the man called Wes (on account of his middle name, Leslie) resolved to come as close as he could to mastering the instrument.

He had no formal teachers, which was to be a boon. Those who are self-taught are often able to be so because of what they already contain within who they are. That’s the real teacher. No one could have taught Mozart how to be Mozart, nor Charlie Parker how to be Charlie Parker; so it was with Wes Montgomery, too.

It didn’t take long before he was playing in clubs, imitating Christian. In 1948, Lionel Hampton was passing through town, happened to be in need of a guitar player, and found himself taken with the man who could play Christian’s riffs and licks with such proficiency.

The current copycat — who would later become an all-out original — had himself a big-time gig that lasted for two years. Montgomery was scared of flying, so he’d drive from venue to venue. One wonders what occupied his mind, where he thought he could go in his playing. Presumably he determined that more was possible: that he wouldn’t ultimately be only a Christian acolyte, a spreader of someone else’s six-string gospel.

He played with people like Fats Navarro and Charles Mingus, and each time he came back home to Indianapolis,

people would remark how much better Montgomery's playing had gotten. Still, he was restless and discouraged.

"I got pretty good and went on the road with a group," Montgomery summarized this period. "We starved."

As a result, he tried to cram additional life into what was an already very busy situation. The man had seven kids, so there was that. He kept the welding job. After his daytime occupation, he'd play no less than two clubs at night. He smoked constantly, worked himself to exhaustion, and would black out. In some ways, it's surprising that he got to his mid-forties before succumbing to a heart attack.

Eventually — in 1959, at an after-hours club in Indianapolis called The Missile Room — Cannonball Adderley heard what Montgomery could do on the bandstand. He had become his own stylist, having ditched the Charlie Christian-isms. Adderley approached producer Orrin Keepnews, saying, in effect, "you need to sign this guy."

A contract was offered, and Montgomery entered the Riverside stable, where that first game-changer of a record, *The Wes Montgomery Trio*, appeared in the last year of the 1950s. In doing so, it ushered in a whole new approach to jazz guitar in the decade to follow. Not just jazz guitar, either: rock guitar, fusion guitar, blues-rock guitar. A lot of people were going to listen to Wes Montgomery just as hard as Wes Montgomery had listened to Charlie Christian.

THERE AREN'T MANY ALBUMS that change the history of an instrument, where we can pinpoint a long-running road breaking off into a new direction. We're talking about an almost 20-year gap since the guitar in jazz had been overhauled, and now here was this fellow ostensibly out of nowhere, doing things no one had heard before.

Montgomery is joined by Melvin Rhyne on organ and Paul Parker on drums. It's a minimalistic set-up, but that only accentuates the symphonic quality of Montgomery's guitar, how it appears to be everywhere at once, without coming across as busy or manic. There's density to the sound, and that density is Montgomery's controlled doing. Christian would get in and get out; Montgomery stays and expands. He's more of a builder than Christian. Hearing him on this first record, one is reminded of a basketball player who makes his way to the hole by absorbing the contact of other bodies and rolling away from defenders, in effect scoring by passing from human to human. It's a kind of communal approach to putting the ball in the hoop.

"I believe in range," Montgomery later said, and that was audibly evident from his first official vinyl statement. The record starts with Thelonious Monk's "'Round Midnight," so listeners knew that Montgomery wouldn't be electing for the easy-peasy approach to his career as a leader. Montgomery claimed that he didn't know that many chords, which is like Chekhov saying he didn't know that many words. "'Round Midnight" functions as a bluesy fugue that marks the end of one day and the opening minutes — the opening notes — of the next. It's a passage song from a passage player.

"There's a lot of tunes that I play all the time — sometimes I hear them in a different register," Montgomery said. Hearing is a gift. Wes Montgomery knew how to listen, which was central to his playing. He appears to take a direction down a hallway, then alters course, and goes down another that is more brightly lit. One is reminded of Billie Holiday remarking that she never sang a song the same way twice, but it's as though Montgomery never plays a lick one single way, even as he's playing it. This was the guitar as a form of wonder, of riddle, but also an answer to the question of what comes next in the lineage of an instrument, and jazz medium itself. "This does," Montgomery seemed to be telling us.

"'Round Midnight" is a reticular composition, as so many of Monk's were; Montgomery makes a celebration of dancing in the web with ease and felicity. It's only a master who is capable of letting complexity be complexity, but making sure the meaning in that work imparts itself to a listener as readily as hearing the water of a stream rush over the rocks beneath.

Nor was Montgomery jesting about his preferred adherence to, and faith in — expansiveness. He handles ballads ("Yesterdays," "The End of a Love Affair), as well as hard bop (Horace Silver's "Ecaroh"). He also rolls out two originals, the slinky "Missile Blues" and the

soul-jazz-foreshadowing "Jingles." Even a jazz veteran is apt to think," What do we call this?" before realizing that labels just won't do. The latter track presages hard bop, but you wouldn't call it hard bop itself. It's laden with single-note colorations. Montgomery was a pointillist player, a painter of sound who worked in one-unit controlled bursts that filled up a canvas seamlessly.

Take a few steps back, and those points of sound merged into pure, soulful, totality. It's no surprise that in listening — and listening well — to John Coltrane, Montgomery identified the spirit of a similar spiritual quester. The guitar had never had such depth. This wasn't flash; it contained an aspect of awakening, of spiritual apotheosis. To experience Montgomery from the career-commencing jump of *The Wes Montgomery Trio* is to venture to a holy place, one that happened to be defined by, and to mark, the daily miracles of the secular.

Jazz is loved for being made in the moment. That's how it most resembles many facets of life. One can plan, but life happens, and one has to respond to that happening. The guitar solos on *The Wes Montgomery Trio* reveal a man thinking fast, but it's a man who was able to do just that, and execute at this level, because he'd taken the time in the first place to get everything right. As a result, even a blazing Wes Montgomery torrent of chordal phrases — which becomes the

"There's a reason people came to know Montgomery's initial LP by its quasi-alternative title of A Dynamic New Sound."

dominant later stuff of 1965's Smokin' at the Half Note — feel like they've taken their time in getting there. Montgomery's pacing exists out of time, the same way that Ahmad Jamal's did. Each note arrives when it should, unhurried, even when it's with a flash of fretboard work that makes you wonder how human fingers could produce that sound.

Montgomery's sophomore outing, *The Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes Montgomery* is the flashier affair — it is to modern jazz guitar what Jimi Hendrix's *Are You Experienced?* remains to all rock players — but there's a reason that scores of people came to know Montgomery's initial LP by its quasi-alternative title of *A Dynamic New Sound*. To be fair, this was fairly common signposting in late 1950s jazz marketing, but a single listen to the album conveyed the honest-to-goodness truth for once.

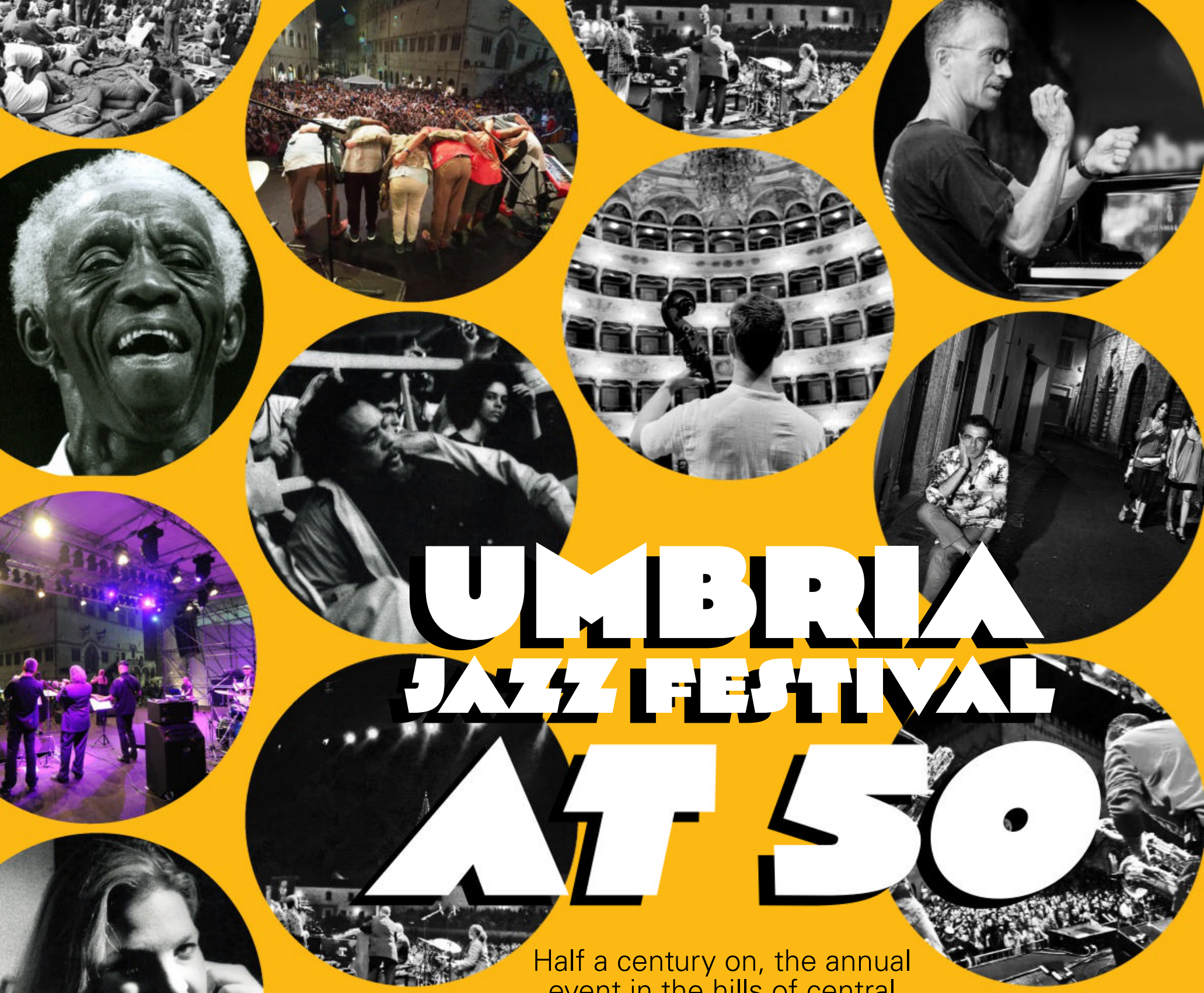
THE WES MONTGOMERY TRIO kicks off an album-run that takes us to that 1965 live session. So long as Montgomery stuck to the path of his vision, he made perfect — or near perfect — art that also risked a lot. He came off as a player who refused to do anything but strive, the guitar's answer to Coltrane. Nothing Montgomery did — for all of his technical achievement — surpassed the cumulative power of his mental approach. One doesn't just hear him think in his playing — you hear him live and grow.

Picking favorites is a fool's errand, but one for a fool having loads of fun. 1961's *So Much Guitar* — with a title that suggests manna has been located — is downright heady, an album for a listener to think their way through; groove abounds, but at a time when jazz was having a jukebox heyday, *So Much Guitar* resonates as a suggestion to sit down for a half hour or so, and let the music wash over you. See what you think as a result. You are apt to find that your listening sensibilities have changed, and expectations reassembled—or, better yet, obliterated.

For consistency of quality, there's arguably nothing to touch these dozen or so albums in jazz guitar history. They are both a benchmark and a bench. That sleeper album today becomes the new and latest favorite tomorrow. The 1962 live album, *Full House*, for example, has a knack for reclaiming the championship, but don't make the error of overlooking *Movin' Along* (1960) and Boss *Guitar* (1963). One can rest upon them, gathering one's own purpose and trying to locate direction, and they also point to something beyond the here and now.

Six years is an eternity in jazz especially, all the more so when epochal statements — at least sonically speaking — are a creator's norm. The man who worked himself to death played himself to a kind of eternal life. The day of perpetual birth, we might say, just happens to be called *The Wes Montgomery Trio*.

There's little wonder that he made sure he was ready to go before he formally began the process of reinventing what people thought his particular instrument could achieve, with all of its attendant wonder. You're going to be around for a long, long time after that. Best to get it right, which is exactly what Wes Montgomery had the talent—and the guiding vision — to do. ***JT***



UMBRIA JAZZ FESTIVAL AT 50

Half a century on, the annual event in the hills of central Italy remains a model for international jazz festivals

BY ASHLEY KAHN

Umbria Jazz 96

Diana Krall

Dizzy Gillepsie

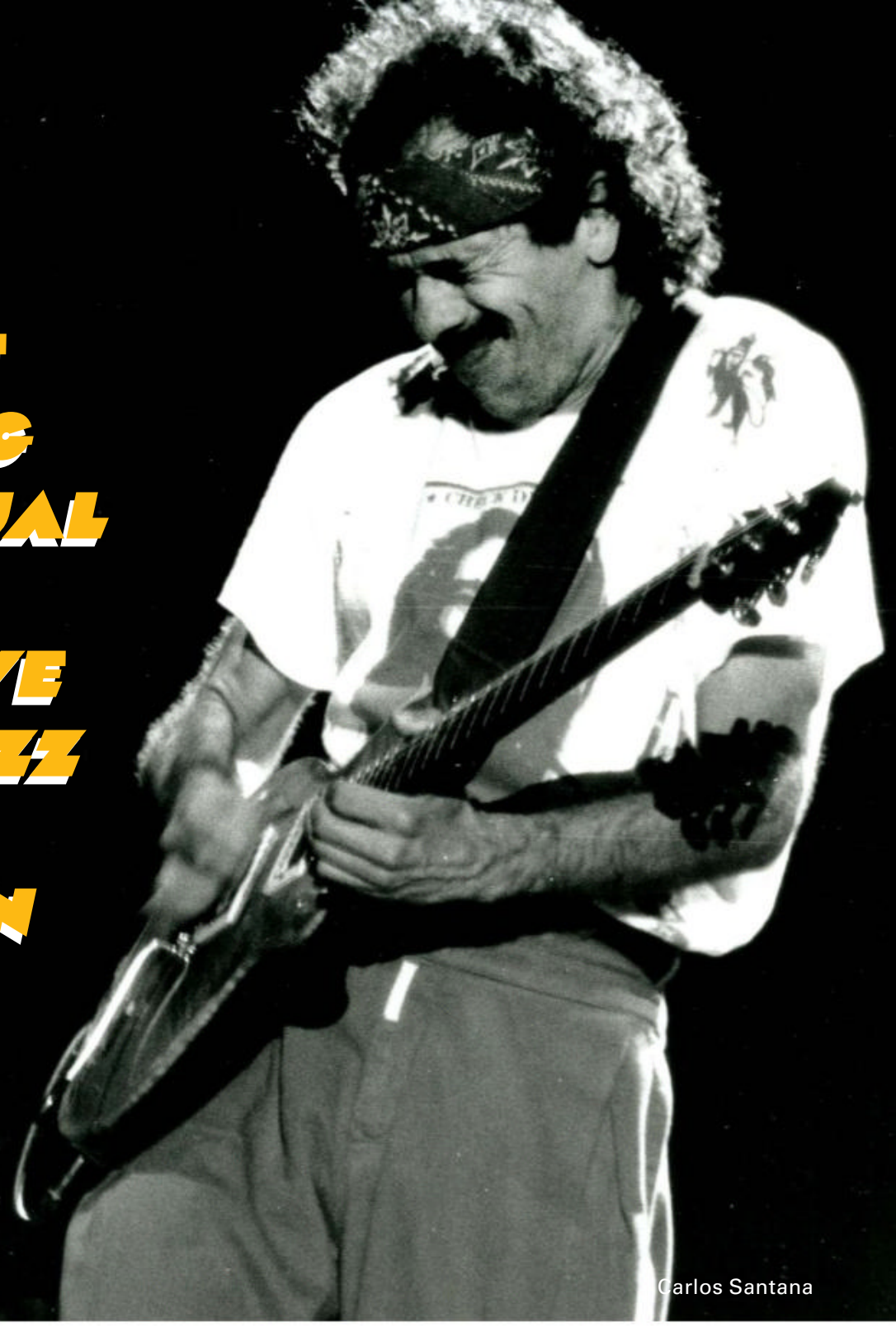
AUGURONI!

If you want to take the Italian word for congratulations, "auguri," and push it to 11, just add on the "-oni."

When the Umbria Jazz Festival marks its 50th year this coming July, that linguistic tag will be particularly appropriate in the small Italian hilltop town of Perugia, the long-standing seat of the festival, as it once again hosts an influx of crowds and an outpouring of music on a variety of indoor and outdoor stages. Brad Mehldau, Snarky Puppy, Branford Marsalis, Ben Harper, Joe Bonamassa, Stewart Copeland, Rhiannon Giddens, and Paolo Conte are among the bigger headliners who've been announced to perform between July 7 and 16. A generous slate of European and American performers will be there as well, including Samara Joy, Paolo Fresu, Bill Frisell, Gianluca Petrella, Fred Hersch (with Enrico Rava), Mauro Ottolini, and Danilo Perez, among others.

It's a milestone event, for sure. In many ways, it will be business as usual—or return to usual, as most European festivals, Umbria included, are still in the process of ramping up to pre-pandemic norms. Yet Umbria Jazz's golden anniversary provides a chance to look back on the history of this annual celebration but to also consider the legacy of the European festival circuit: How it began and how it grew to the significant role it plays in the jazz world today. It also offered the opportunity to speak with Carlo Pagnotta, who started the festival in 1973.

Born in 1933, Pagnotta celebrates his 90th birthday this year and still holds the festival's creative reigns as artistic director. He stands as one of the last of a tribe of European jazz fans who stepped up in the 1960s and '70s to create outdoor festivals in the historic, idyllic settings they all grew up in. The seeds planted in those years by the likes of Pagnotta — as well as Jyrki Kangas in Pori, Finland; Claude Nobs in Montreux, Switzerland; Paul Acket in The Hague, Netherlands; Jean-Paul Boutellier in Vienne, France; and George Wein in Nice, France (the sole American among them and ringleader of sorts) — have now matured into a growth industry that draws hundreds of thousands of visitors and has major economic impact upon local communities. Today, the festivals often coordinate their schedules to minimize overlap and maximize attendance. In doing so, they have created a self-contained circuit for touring jazz musicians that can provide weeks, sometimes months, of continuous, profitable work through the summer. Fees for single festival performances can often match or



Carlos Santana

SOON FESTIVALS BEGAN POPPING UP ON AN ANNUAL BASIS, WITH MORE EXPANSIVE BOOKINGS. "JAZZ FROM J TO Z," AS GEORGE WEIN LIKED TO SAY.

Carlo Pagnotta

even exceed a week in a club back home.

A brief history to fill in the picture: In the 1950s and through most of the '60s, a number of entrepreneurial Americans like Wein, Norman Granz, and Morris Levy assembled multiple-artist package tours for European cities, intending them to serve as a one-night mini-festivals, and worked with local promoters in each country. The concept of the summer jazz festival — outdoor, multiple stages, broad spectrum of jazz styles, and with branded sponsor support — was still a relatively new idea, even in the U.S. There had been multiple attempts to establish this example in Paris, Berlin, and other cities, but they had been contained efforts: limited musical styles, in a single, indoor venue. Not much had taken root.

But by the mid-'60s, festivals were beginning to happen—Pori in '66, Montreux a year later—as Wein recalled in his memoirs. The breakthrough came in the late '60s, when avant-garde jazz found a home overseas. "New Thing improvisers had established a firm foothold throughout Europe; a number of festivals were devoted to its cause," Wein wrote. "I'd toured with such avant-garde icons as Archie Shepp, Albert Ayler, Ornette Coleman, and Cecil Taylor… " At that point, there was no turning back. Soon festivals began popping up on an annual basis, with more expansive bookings, swing, bop, fusion, free: "Jazz from J to Z," as Wein liked to say.

Almost immediately, a number began to book popular music performers — rock, soul, funk — on the same bills as jazz, selling tickets and proving that among European jazz festivals, programming was to be a flexible concept. (To this day, confusion can still reign as local press question why Deep Purple — or Lauryn Hill, Black Star, or Diplo — are sharing the stage with Joshua Redman or Anat Cohen.) Some festivals survived one year to the next and grew. Many did not. Each used performance arenas and theaters available in their areas or built custom stages for their own purpose. In Vienne, a 2,000-year-old Roman amphitheater built for 13,000 was the obvious choice as the primary venue. Each festival developed its own character and rituals—parades, wining, dining—shaped by the area's community and culture. Local chefs were called on to prepare food for the touring artists; often restaurants and bars hosted jam sessions.

The one aspect they all shared — and continued to as the festivals grew — was a sense of openness and participation. The prevailing tenet was that the music could and should filter freely off the stages and reach throughout the city. Many shows were

Sting and Gil Evans

free and took place in public spaces. Regional conservatories and music programs were brought into the mix; touring musicians spoke to the students, and student groups were recruited to perform as well.

Umbria Jazz Festival fits the above model like a glove. Even the performances in its biggest, most exclusive ticketed events—held in the outdoor Arena Santa Giuliana—can be freely heard and viewed from the public garden that leads to it. The idea of music presentation as a public service was the priority Pagnotta kept returning to as he spoke of the music that determined his professional path and the festival that has surpassed all expectations. "When we started in 1973, I never imagined that I would become a festival expert. At that time, I had a men's clothing shop and a restaurant — jazz was just a pastime. But a very serious one!"

(Full disclosure: In the past 20 years, I've been an invited guest to Umbria Jazz's summer festival in Perugia and winter edition in Orvieto, attending performances and meeting musicians and fans. I have also conducted public interviews and panel discussions and screened films. Back in the 1990s, I was tour manager for a number of jazz and South African groups that performed at the festival.)

Ashley Kahn: Tell us how Umbria Jazz Festival first began and what the biggest challenges were at the start.

Carlo Pagnotta: I had been President of the Jazz Club Perugia since the 1960s, and we presented some shows, but the idea of Umbria Jazz Festival started in 1973 after we took a proposal of mine to the Regione Umbria, the regional government. That first year we had Weather Report, and that was their first time in Italy. But even with that, I certainly never imagined that Umbria Jazz would become one of the most important jazz festivals.

The biggest challenges arose from the fact that at that start in the early '70s, all Umbria Jazz concerts were free to the public — and this was the first time this had happened in Italy. So when we started, we had free concerts in Perugia and two other cities in Umbria: Gubbio and Terni. So you can imagine we had a massive influx of young people, not all who were jazz fans, and this created vast disturbances. This was also the time of the youth protests that were taking place in Italy and around the world. Many younger students were radical in their thinking and didn't understand the jazz tradition. Some musicians were disrespected, if you can believe it.

So after only a few years, we were forced to close the festival down in 1978. Then we started it up again in 1982 with a different formula, the one which still exists today: ticketed concerts in various venues while still offering free concerts in the piazzas. We were still trying to cover Umbria with concerts in other

STING/EVANS: GIANCARLO BELFIORE/ UMBRIA JAZZ

Charles Mingus

Umbrian localities: Todi, Città della Pieve, Lake Trasimeno, Città di Castello, Orvieto. Now we mainly focus on Perugia, and in Orvieto, we do Umbria Jazz Winter for five days between Christmas and New Year's. We did some shows last year in Terni again.

I can only imagine how your budget has grown and changed over the years. Your funding comes from multiple sources, not just ticket sales, right?
Our revenue is from tickets plus public and private sources. The largest contributors continue to be *Regione Umbria, Comune di Perugia, Fondazione Perugia*, and various corporate sponsors like CONAD [Italy's largest food retailer], etc. But since 2017, the Italian government, as a result of a special law defining the festival being of national and international interest, contributes 1 million euros annually. That's a big help.

La Bella Vista (The Good View)

It's hard not to sound like a travel brochure in describing the effect of attending a European jazz festival. The backdrop of Renaissance-era architecture and 18th-century theaters? The feasts of regional cuisine and wine, all stemming from local produce? That's definitely an important part of it. So is the opportunity to hear jazz players who don't often get invited to the U.S. and also to witness rare, usually unplanned musical interactions. For jazz fans, it's simply an experience that must be experienced; for musicians, it's a career goal by which success can be measured.

The following conversation with the booking agent Scott Southard—head of International Music Network—offers an inside view on the European jazz festival scene today, and Umbria Jazz in particular.

What's the importance of the European festival circuit to the life of the jazz community today, and has it changed since the '70s?
I came into booking European festivals in the mid-'80s, when many of today's important festivals were scaling up as destination events, mostly occurring in summer months. Many of the festival promoters were extremely creative working with alternative venues in secondary markets, and almost all of them were serious devotees of jazz and blues.

At the time, Stan Getz, Miles Davis, and Dizzy Gillespie were the headliners, while artists like Diana Krall, Wynton Marsalis, and Bobby McFerrin were new discoveries just coming into their own.

Today there are festivals year-round, in remote mountaintop villages and major urban centers alike. Jazz is doing well and the festival scene along with it.

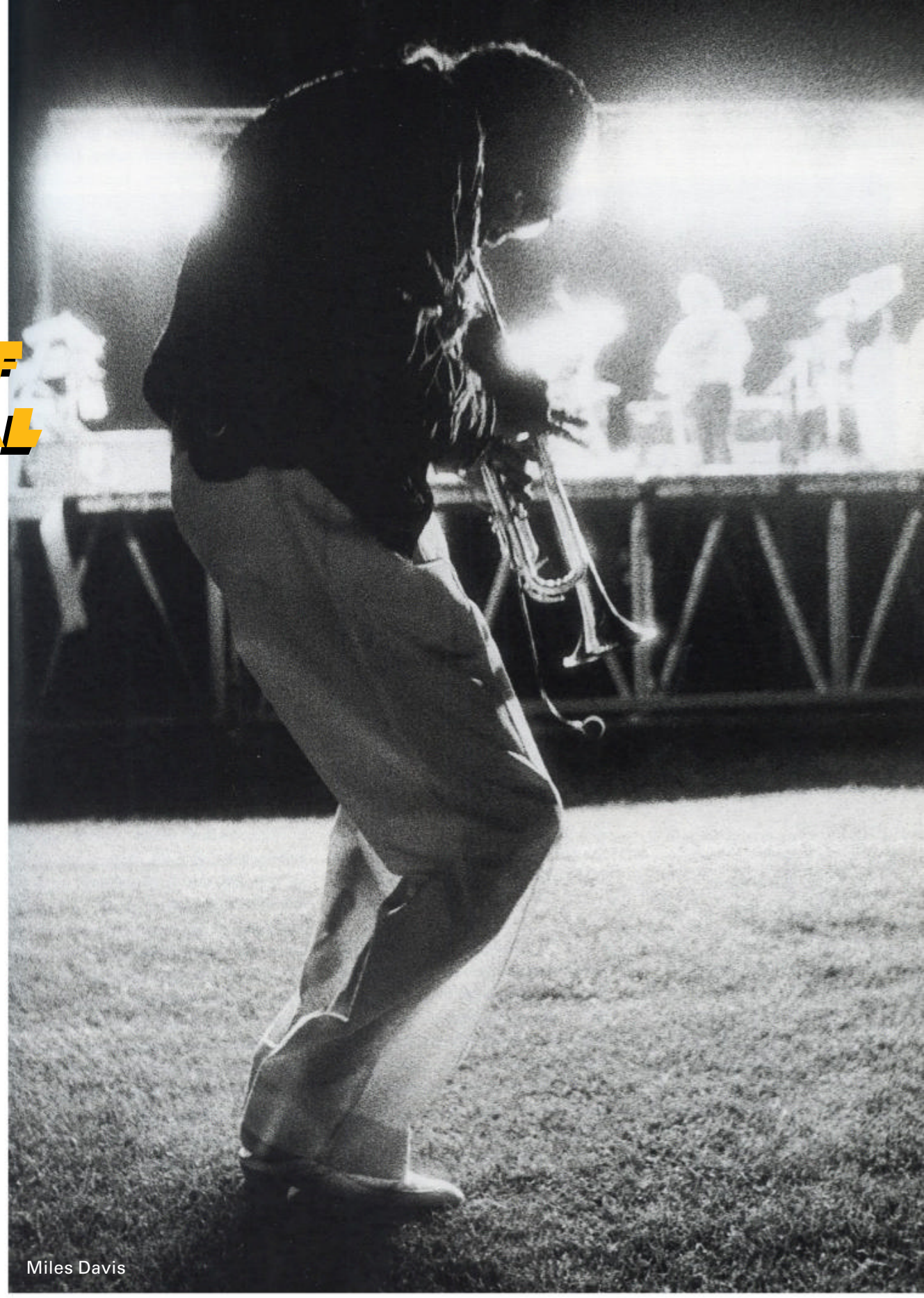
Programming is wide open, offering more opportunities for innovation but greater financial pressure to put butts in seats. So if a booker has to pay €500,000 to the headliner, naturally there will be less to compensate the mid-level artists who constitute the core of the jazz lineup and virtually nothing for emerging artists who often are losing money for the opportunity for exposure.

Umbria Jazz is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year — how would you describe its stature compared to other European festivals?
Certainly Umbria Jazz has been a model of programming excellence and clear example for how community support can fuel the growth of a festival. For five decades, it has been a taste-making event that is followed by other festivals. Their commitment to free concerts, a wide-ranging education program, public broadcasting, and support for development of local artists is a model that many others have adopted.

I know you've been there a few times. Any personal memories of Umbria Jazz that stand out?
Getting to Perugia is not easy, especially for touring musicians; Rome airport, three hours of traffic, little sleep, nothing to eat. But when you get to the top of the old city, it all changes. Pull up a chair on the piazza of the Hotel Brufani, order an apertivo and get ready for the endless memories of good food and great music.

Why do you think it's survived for 50 years?
The passion of one man: its founder, Carlo Pagnotta.

"I HAVE SO MANY MEMORIES OF EXCEPTIONAL SHOWS — SO MANY LEGENDS."


Miles Davis

Let's go back to the beginning. How did you get into jazz in the first place?

My love for jazz began at the end of the 1940s while I was still at school and then continued in the 1950s when I was part of the board of the Hot Club Perugia—Adriano Mazzoletti was the president then, this was before it became the Jazz Club. I used to go around to people on the street and ask for 1,000 lire and say, "OK, from now on you're a member of the Hot Club!" We were able to make some great things happen. We brought Louis Armstrong to play Teatro Morlacchi in Perugia in 1955 and Chet Baker a year later in the Sala dei Notari. We still use both those venues for the festival.

In 1957, I went to live in London, and during my time there, I got to know artists like Ronnie Scott, Tubby Hayes, just to mention a couple. I was present at the inauguration of Ronnie Scott's jazz club, in October 1958, in a basement that had no license to sell alcohol. Only at the beginning of the '60s did Ronnie move the club to its present premises.
Then I came back home and started my clothing store — Sir Charles — and worked in my father's restaurant, and jazz stayed with me.

When you came up with the proposal you took to the regional government, were you thinking of any other festivals, or did you have anyone to help guide you?

No other festival was a model for Umbria Jazz—and there was no mentor. From the beginning, my title was, and remains, that of founder, as it was my name on the proposal. My title of artistic director came later. In the early days, what was very important was the collaboration between myself and Alberto Alberti, who worked closely with George Wein and with whom I had been friends since my days at Bologna University in the early '50s. He had started an important festival in Bologna, too.

I met George for the first time in 1963, and we got to know each other over the years. It's sad that he's gone. We have all lost a friend, a maestro, really. I remember the convivial evenings in Newport and New Orleans, as well as in his home, together with our colleagues from the IJFO [the International Jazz Festivals Organization that includes festival producers from Umbria, Vienne, North Sea, Molde, Montreux, Newport, Monterey, Montreal, and others], during our October meetings in New York.

Undoubtedly, major European jazz festivals have contributed greatly to the world of jazz. I would like to point out that artists like Brad Mehldau, Diana Krall, Cecile McLorin Salvant, Gregory Porter—just to mention a few—made their debut at Umbria Jazz when they were completely unknown in Italy. Now, after the Grammys, I have to also mention Samara Joy, who was our guest in Perugia in 2021 and in 2022 as artist-in-residence.

Phil Collins

Al Jarreau

A lot has changed over the years. In the beginning, it was George's Festival Productions that managed many of the artists that we booked. Then other important booking agencies appeared in the U.S., Europe, and also in Italy, and I had to get to know all the new artists. Now it's not as easy to keep up with everything as I did at the beginning. But we have an experienced staff that works and takes care of everything. I remember George often reminded me that I was the person who traveled most, going to various festivals and concerts.

And you still do! I heard you're coming to New Orleans for Jazzfest this year. Can we discuss how you balance booking American and Italian musicians at Umbria Jazz?
At the beginning, there were fewer important Italian musicians — some were Enrico Rava, Giovanni Tommaso, Enrico Pieranunzi, Dino Piana, and a few older legends of Italian jazz who have unfortunately left us, such as Franco Cerri, Gianni Basso, and Oscar Valdambrini. Then Italian jazz began to grow, with musicians like Stefano Bollani, Paolo Fresu, and Danilo Rea, and now there are too many to count. Today, many of these musicians share the main stages with the big American and European bands.

I have heard from a number of other Italian jazz artists like Fresu and [bassist] Tommaso that Umbria Jazz became like a school for them, hearing artists like Art Blakey, Johnny Griffin, and others. And now they are doing the teaching during the festival with the Berklee program that started in 1985.
That's true. But I have so many memories of exceptional shows — so many legends. Charles Mingus, Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, Stan Getz, Dizzy Gillespie, Ornette Coleman, João Gilberto, Quincy Jones, Burt Bacharach. We had Brazilian giants like Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil and rock stars like Eric Clapton, Santana, R.E.M., Prince, Elton John.

If I had to choose my favorites, I liked the special collaborations, like Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga. But I always like to remember one historic performance that only happened in Perugia, nowhere else: the only concert of The Gil Evans Orchestra with Sting in 1987.

That is an amazing history with so many legends — and too many are now gone. One last question: With all the experiences you've had, what are your favorite and least favorite things about the festival today?
My favorite place during the festival is at the jam sessions because I'm still a jazz fan of the old guard. The feeling you get at a good jam session is not felt anywhere else! So, my favorite thing to do is still to stay up as late as possible at those jams. My least favorite thing? Seeing empty seats at a venue. ***JT***

JAZZ FESTIVAL GUIDE 2023

United States

NORTHEAST

BOSCOV'S BERKS JAZZ FEST
March 24–April 2, 2023
Various venues,
Reading/Berks County, PA
www.berksjazzfest.com

INTERNATIONAL JAZZ DAY
April 30, 2023
Various venues worldwide
www.jazzday.com

EXIT ZERO JAZZ FESTIVAL
May 5–7, 2023
Cape May Convention Hall
Cape May, NJ
www.exitzerojazzfestival.com

JAZZ & BLUES, WINE & BREWS
May 6, 2023
Historic Downtown
Berlin, MD
www.berlinchamber.org

ESSENTIALLY ELLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL JAZZ BAND COMPETITION AND FESTIVAL
May 11–13, 2023
Jazz at Lincoln Center
New York, NY
academy.jazz.org/ee

MARY LOU WILLIAMS JAZZ FESTIVAL
May 12–13, 2023
Kennedy Center,
Washington, DC
www.kennedy-center.org

CAPITAL JAZZ FEST
June 2–4, 2023
Merriweather Post Pavilion,
Columbia, MD
www.capitaljazz.com

DOLLAR BANK THREE RIVERS ARTS FESTIVAL
June 2–11, 2023
Point State Park &
surrounding areas,
Pittsburgh, PA
www.traf.trustarts.org

NATIONAL WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL
June 10, 2023
Timonium Fairgrounds
Timonium, MD
www.uncorkthefun.com

VISION FESTIVAL
June 21–26, 2023
Roulette,
Brooklyn, NY
www.artsforart.org/vision.html

XEROX ROCHESTER INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 23–July 1, 2023
Various venues,
Rochester, NY
www.rochesterjazz.com

DUPONT CLIFFORD BROWN JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 21–25, 2023
Rodney Square,
10th and Market Streets,
Wilmington, DE
www.cliffordbrownjazzfest.com

FREIHOFER'S SARATOGA JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 24–25, 2023
Saratoga Performing
Arts Center,
Saratoga Springs, NY
www.saratoga.com/summer/jazz-festival

WINDJAMMER DAYS
June 25–July 1, 2023
Boothbay Harbor
Waterfront
and other locations,
Boothbay Harbor, ME
www.boothbayharbor.com

BLUE NOTE JAZZ FESTIVAL
June (Dates TBD) 2023
Various venues,
Harlem, New York, NY
www.bluenotejazzfestival.com

BURLINGTON DISCOVER JAZZ FESTIVAL
June (Dates TBD) 2023
Various venues,
Burlington, VT
www.discoverjazz.com

MANASSAS JAZZ FESTIVAL
June (Dates TBD) 2023
Manassas Museum lawn,
Manassas, VA
www.visitmanassas.org

BANG ON A CAN SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVAL
July 10–August 30, 2023
MASS MoCA,
North Adams, MA
www.bangonacan.org/summer_festival

GREATER HARTFORD FESTIVAL OF JAZZ
July 13–16, 2023
Downtown Hartford
Bushnell Park
Hartford, CT
www.hartfordjazz.org

FLOYDFEST
July 26–23, 2023
Blue Ridge Parkway,
Floyd, VA
www.floydfest.com

LITCHFIELD JAZZ FESTIVAL
July 28–30, 2023
Emerson Performing Arts
Center at The Gunnery,
Washington, CT
www.litchfieldjazzfest.com

PROVINCETOWN JAZZ FESTIVAL
July & August 2023
www.provincetownjazzfestival.org

NEWPORT JAZZ FESTIVAL
August 4–6, 2023
Fort Adams State Park,
Newport, RI
www.newportjazz.org

MUSIKFEST
August 4–12, 2023
Downtown, Bethlehem, PA
www.musikfest.org

HUDSON VALLEY JAZZ FESTIVAL
August 9–13, 2023
Warwick, NY
www.hudsonvalleyjazzfest.org

MONTCLAIR JAZZ FESTIVAL
August 12–September 9, 2023
Various venues,
Montclair, NJ
www.montclairjazzfestival.org

BOSCOV'S BERKS JAZZ FEST
August 13–22, 2023
Various venues,
Reading, PA
www.berksjazzfest.com

CHARLIE PARKER JAZZ FESTIVAL
August (Dates TBD) 2023
Marcus Garvey Park, Tompkins
Square Park,
New York, NY
www.cityparksfoundation.org

MORRISTOWN JAZZ & BLUES FESTIVAL
September 17, 2023
On the Green,
Morristown, NJ
www.morristownjazzandblues.com

DC JAZZ FESTIVAL
September 2–4, 2023
Various venues,
Washington, DC
www.dcjazzfest.org

ALBANY RIVERFRONT JAZZ FESTIVAL
September 9, 2023
Albany Riverfront,
Albany, NY
www.albanyevents.org/events/Albany-Jazz-Festival

PITTSBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL
September 15–17, 2023
Various venues,
Pittsburgh, PA
www.pittsburghjazzlive.com

ARTSCAPE
September 20–24, 2023
Mount Royal
Avenue Corridor,
Baltimore, MD
www.artscape.org

ROSSLYN JAZZ FESTIVAL
September (Dates TBD), 2023
Gateway Park,
Arlington, VA
www.rosslynva.org

CAPITAL AUDIO FEST
November 10–12, 2023
Hilton Hotel at Twinbrook Metro
Rockville, MD
www.capitalaudiofest.com

NYC WINTER JAZZFEST
January 2024 (Dates TBD)
Various venues, New York, NY
www.winterjazzfest.com

MID-ATLANTIC

JAZZ FESTIVAL
February 18–21, 2024
Rockville Hilton,
Rockville, MD
www.midatlanticjazzfestival.org

DELAWARE WATER GAP CELEBRATION OF THE ARTS
2023 Dates TBD
Delaware Avenue,
Delaware Water Gap, PA
www.cotajazz.org

DJANGO REINHARDT NY FESTIVAL
2023 Dates TBD
Birdland,
New York, NY
www.djangobirdland.com

SOUTHEAST

SAVANNAH MUSIC FESTIVAL
March 23–April 8, 2023
Various venues,
Savannah, GA
www.savannahmusicfestival.org

FRENCH QUARTER FESTIVAL
April 13–16, 2023
French Quarter,
New Orleans, LA
www.fqfi.org

ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY JAZZ FESTIVAL
April 15, 2023
Vicksburg Convention Center,
Vicksburg, MS
www.alcorn.edu

SEABREEZE JAZZ FESTIVAL
April 19–23, 2023
Pier Park Outdoor
Amphitheatre,
Panama City, FL
www.seabreezejazzfestival.com

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE LOUISIANE
April 26–30, 2023
Outdoor/Virtual,
Lafayette, LA
festivalinternational.org

NEW ORLEANS JAZZ & HERITAGE FESTIVAL
April 28–May 7, 2023
Fair Grounds Race Course,
New Orleans, LA
www.nojazzfest.com

GREAT GRAPES! WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL
May 6, 2023 (postponed from 2022)
September 30, 2023 (2023 edition)
Symphony Park at SouthPark Mall,
Charlotte, NC
charlotte.uncorkthefun.com

SUNFEST
May 5–7, 2023
Flagler Drive waterfront,
West Palm Beach, FL
www.sunfest.com

ARTSPLOSURE
May 20–21, 2023
Moore Square Park,
Raleigh, NC
www.artsplosure.org

JACKSONVILLE JAZZ FESTIVAL
May 25–28, 2023
Various venues,
Jacksonville, FL
jacksonvillejazzfest.com

SPOLETO FESTIVAL USA
May 26–June 11, 2023
Various venues in historic theaters, churches
and outdoor spaces,
Charleston, SC
www.spoletousa.org

HAMPTON JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 23–25, 2023
Hampton Coliseum,
Hampton, VA
www.hamptonjazzfestival.com

FESTIVAL FOR THE ENO
July 1 & 4, 2023
West Point on the Eno
Durham City Park,
Durham, NC
www.enofest.org

W.C. HANDY MUSIC FESTIVAL
July 21–30, 2023
The Shoal, Florence, AL
www.wchandymusicfestival.org

SATCHMO SUMMERFEST
August 5–6, 2023
Louisiana State Museum's
Old U.S. Mint,
New Orleans, LA
satchmosummerfest.org

AT&T NORFOLK JAZZ FESTIVAL
August 18–19, 2023
Town Point Park,
Norfolk, VA
festevents.org/events/2020/jazz-fest

LOUISIANA SHRIMP &PETROLEUM FESTIVAL
August 31–September 4, 2023
Downtown,
Morgan City, LA
www.shrimpandpetroleum.org

LOW COUNTRY JAZZ FESTIVAL
September 1–3, 2023
Charleston Gaillard Center,
North Charleston, SC
www.lowcountryjazzfest.com

LES DEMERLE AMELIA ISLAND JAZZ FESTIVAL
October 1–8, 2023
Amelia Island,
Fernandina Beach, FL
www.ameliaislandjazzfestival.com

DUCK JAZZ FESTIVAL
October 7–8, 2023
Duck Town Green,
Duck, NC
www.duckjazz.com

KENTUCK FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS
October 14–15, 2023
Kentuck Park,
Northport, AL
www.kentuck.org

CLEARWATER JAZZ HOLIDAY
October 19–22, 2023
Coachman Park,
Clearwater, FL
www.clearwaterjazz.com

SUNCOAST DIXIELAND JAZZ CLASSIC
November 17–19, 2023
Sand Key Resort,
Clearwater Beach, FL
www.suncoastjazzfestival.com

JAZZ EDUCATION NETWORK CONFERENCE
January 3–6, 2024
New Orleans, LA
www.jazzednet.org

ALABAMA WOMEN IN JAZZ FESTIVAL
2023 Dates TBD
UAH Amphitheater,
Huntsville, AL
www.valleyartsandentertainment.org

ATLANTA JAZZ FESTIVAL
2023 dates TBD
Piedmont Park,
Atlanta, GA
www.atlanta.net/events/atlanta-jazz-festival

GULF COAST ETHNIC & HERITAGE JAZZ FESTIVAL
2023 Dates TBD
Laidlaw Performing Arts Center
University of South Alabama
Mobile, AL
gcehjazzfest.org

PENSACOLA JAZZFEST
2023 dates TBD
Historic Seville Square,
Pensacola, FL
www.jazzpensacola.com

RED RIVER REVEL ARTS FESTIVAL
2023 Dates TBD
Festival Plaza,
Shreveport, LA
www.redriverrevel.com

STEEL CITY JAZZ FESTIVAL
2023 Dates TBD
Downtown,
Birmingham, AL
www.steelcityjazzfestbham.com

SHUTTERSTOCK

2023 INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL GUIDE

MIDWEST

NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY JAZZ FESTIVAL
March 22–24, 2023
NMU Campus, Marquette, MI
www.nmu.edu/music/jazz-festival

WICHITA JAZZ FESTIVAL
April 19–23, 2023
Various venues,
Wichita, KS
www.wichitajazzfestival.com

KNOX-ROOTABAGA JAZZ FEST
May 9–13, 2023
Orpheum Theatre,
Galesburg, IL
www.knox.edu

SCOTT JOPLIN RAGTIME FEST
May 31–June 3, 2023
Historic downtown,
Sedalia, MO
www.scottjoplin.org

GLENN MILLER FESTIVAL
June 8–11, 2023
Various venues,
Clarinda, IA
www.glennmiller.org

TRI-C JAZZFEST CLEVELAND
June 22–24, 2023
Playhouse Square,
Cleveland, OH
www.tri-c.edu/jazzfest

ELKHART JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 22–25, 2023
Downtown,
Elkhart, IN
www.elkhartjazzfestival.com

SUMMER SOLSTICE JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 23–24, 2023
Albert Street, downtown,
East Lansing, MI
www.eljazzfest.com

TWIN CITIES JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 23–24, 2023
Mears Park,
Downtown St. Paul, MN
www.twincitiesjazzfestival.com

IOWA CITY JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 30–July 2, 2023
Downtown Iowa City, IA
www.summerofthearts.org

LANCASTER FESTIVAL
July 20–29, 2023
Various venues,
Lancaster, OH
www.lancasterfestival.org

COLUMBUS JAZZ & RIB FEST
July 21–23, 2023
Downtown,
Columbus, OH
www.hotribscooljazz.org

BIX BEIDERBECKE MEMORIAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
August 3–5, 2023
Rhythm City Casino,
Davenport, IA
www.bixsociety.org

LANSING JAZZFEST
August 4–6, 2023
Old Town,
Lansing, MI
www.jazzlansing.com

CHICAGO JAZZ FESTIVAL
September 1–4, 2023
Millennium Park,
Chicago, IL
www.cityofchicago.org/specialevents

DETROIT INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
September 1–4, 2023
Hart Plaza, Woodward Ave.,
Campus Martius, Detroit, MI
www.detroitjazzfest.com

GRAND HOTEL LABOR DAY JAZZ FESTIVAL
September 1–4, 2023
Grand Hotel,
Mackinac Island, MI
www.grandhotel.com

FOX JAZZ FEST
September 2–3, 2023
Jefferson Park,
Menasha, WI
www.foxjazzfest.com

BRIAN CULBERTSON'S CHICAGO JAZZ GETAWAY
September 14–17, 2023
Fairmont Millennium Park,
Chicago, IL
www.jazzgetaway.com

CHEESE CAPITAL JAZZ CRAWL FOR THE ARTS
2023 Dates TBD
Plymouth Arts Center,
Plymouth, WI
www.plymoutharts.org

HOUSTON INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
2023 Dates TBD
Bayou Music Center,
Houston, TX
www.jazzeducation.org

SOUTH BEND JAZZ FESTIVAL
2023 Dates TBD
Century Center,
South Bend, IN
www.southbendjazzfestival.com

WEST

OCEANSIDE JAZZ FESTIVAL
Vocal Festival
March 30–April 1, 2023
Jazz Band Festival
May 6, 2023
MiraCosta College,
Oceanside, CA
www.oceansidejazzfestival.com

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2023 INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL GUIDE

CHANDLER JAZZ FESTIVAL
March 31–April 1, 2023
Historic Downtown Chandler,
Chandler, AZ
www.chandleraz.gov/jazz

UNC/GREELEY JAZZ FESTIVAL
April 20–22, 2023
UNC Performing Arts Center,
Greeley, CO
www.uncjazzfest.com

RENO JAZZ FESTIVAL
April 27–29, 2023
University of Nevada, Reno
Reno, NV
www.unr.edu/rjf

LAS VEGAS CITY OF LIGHTS JAZZ & R&B FESTIVAL
April 29–30, 2023
Government Amphitheater
Hills Park at Summerlin,
Las Vegas, NV
www.yourjazz.com

JUNEAU JAZZ & CLASSICS
May 5–13, 2023
Various venues,
Juneau, AK
www.jazzandclassics.org

MUCK JAZZFEST
May 11–June 15, 2023
Muckenthaler Cultural Center,
Fullerton, CA
www.themuck.org

WEST TEXAS JAZZ PARTY
June 2–4, 2023
MCM Eleganté,
Odessa, TX
www.wtjs.org/jazz-party

HYATT REGENCY NEWPORT BEACH JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 2–4, 2023
Hyatt Regency Newport Beach,
Newport Beach, CA
www.festivals.hyattconcerts.com

BRIAN CULBERTSON'S NAPA VALLEY JAZZ GETAWAY
June 8–10, 2023
Jamieson Ranch Vineyards,
Napa, CA
www.jazzgetaway.com

SAN FRANCISCO JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 9–16, 2021
SFJAZZ Center,
San Francisco, CA
www.sfjazz.org

JAZZ IN JUNE FESTIVAL
June 15–17, 2023
Brookhaven Village,
Andrews Park, Norman, OK
www.jazzinjune.org

PLAYBOY JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 17–18, 2023
Hollywood Bowl,
Los Angeles, CA
www.hollywoodbowl.com

HEALDSBURG JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 17–25, 2023
Various venues,
Healdsburg, CA
www.healdsburgjazzfestival.org

JAZZ ASPEN SNOWMASS JUNE EXPERIENCE
June 22–25, 2023
Benedict Music Tent,
Aspen, CO
www.jazzaspen.org

FILLMORE JAZZ FESTIVAL
July 1–2, 2023
Fillmore Street,
San Francisco, CA
www.fillmorejazzfestival.com

SAN DIEGO SMOOTH JAZZ FESTIVAL
July 9–11, 2023
Embarcadero Marina Park,
San Diego, CA
www.sandiegosmoothjazzfestival.com

CATHEDRAL PARK JAZZ FESTIVAL
July 14–16, 2023
Cathedral City Park,
Portland, OR
www.jazzoregon.com/festival

FESTIVAL NAPA VALLEY
July 14–23, 2023
Various venues,
Napa Valley, CA
www.festivalnapavalley.org

STANFORD JAZZ FESTIVAL
July 16–21, 2023
Stanford University,
Stanford, CA
www.stanfordjazz.org

FAIRBANKS SUMMER ARTS FESTIVAL
July 16–30, 2023
University of Alaska,
Fairbanks campus,
Fairbanks, AK
www.fsaf.org

CENTRUM'S JAZZ PORT TOWNSEND
July 24–30, 2023
Ft. Worden State Park &
downtown clubs,
Port Townsend, WA
www.centrum.org

FESTIVAL AT SANDPOINT
July 27–August 6, 2023
Memorial Field,
Sandpoint, ID
www.festivalatsandpoint.com

ELLENSBURG MUSIC FESTIVAL
July 28–29, 2023
Historic downtown,
Ellensburg, WA
www.ellensburgmusicfestival.com

EVERGREEN JAZZ FESTIVAL
July 28–30, 2023
Various venues,
Evergreen, CO
www.evergreenjazz.org

TELLURIDE JAZZ FESTIVAL
August 11–13, 2023
Telluride Town Park and clubs,
Telluride, CO
www.telluridejazz.org

SAN JOSE JAZZ SUMMER FEST
August 11–13, 2023
Downtown San Jose,
San Jose, CA
www.summerfest.sanjosejazz.org

LONG BEACH JAZZ FESTIVAL
August 11–13, 2023
Marina Green Park,
Long Beach, CA
www.longbeachjazzfestival.com

VANCOUVER WINE & JAZZ FESTIVAL
August 25–27, 2023
Esther Short Park,
Vancouver, WA
www.vancouverwinejazz.com

PRESCOTT JAZZ SUMMIT
August 25–27, 2023
Downtown Prescott, AZ
www.prescottjazzsummit.net

VAIL JAZZ PARTY
August 30–September 4, 2023
Lionshead Village,
Vail, CO
www.vailjazz.org

JAZZ ASPEN SNOWMASS LABOR DAY EXPERIENCE
September 1–3, 2023
Snowmass Village Town Park,
Snowmass Village, CO
www.jazzaspen.org

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ROCKY MOUNTAIN ARCHTOP FESTIVAL
September 8–10, 2023
Various locations
Arvada, CO
www.archtopfestival.com

NEW MEXICO JAZZ FESTIVAL
September 14–October 1, 2023
Various venues,
Albuquerque, NM
www.outpostspace.org

MONTEREY JAZZ FESTIVAL
September 22–24, 2023
Monterey Fairgrounds,
Monterey, CA
www.montereyjazzfestival.org

BELLEVUE JAZZ & BLUES FESTIVAL
October 4–8, 2023
Various venues,
Downtown Bellevue, WA

DENTON ARTS & JAZZ FESTIVAL
October 6–8, 2023
Denton's Quakertown Park
and Facilities,
Denton, TX
www.dentonjazzfest.com
www.bellevuedowntown.com

CATALINA ISLAND JAZZTRAX FESTIVAL
October 13–15, 2023
Avalon Casino Ballroom,
Avalon, CA
www.jazztrax.com

SUN VALLEY JAZZ JAMBOREE
October 18–22, 2023
Sun Valley Resort,
Sun Valley, ID
www.sunvalleyjazz.com

NEXT GENERATION JAZZ FESTIVAL
2023 Dates TBD
Monterey Conference Center,
Monterey, CA
www.montereyjazzfestival.org

OREGON COAST JAZZ PARTY
2023 Dates TBD
Performing Arts Center
Newport, OR
https://coastarts.org/oregon-coast-jazz-party

EARSHOT JAZZ FESTIVAL
2023 Dates TBD
Various venues,
Seattle, WA
www.earshot.org

Canada, Caribbean and Cruises

CANADA

FESTIVAL JAZZ & BLUES DE SAGUENAY
April 26–29, 2023
Chicoutimi, Jonquiere, QC
www.jazzetblues.com

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE MUSIQUE ACTUELLE DE VICTORIAVILLE
May 15–21, 2023
Various venues,
Victoriaville, QC
www.fimav.qc.ca

TD WINNIPEG INTERNATIONALJAZZ FESTIVAL
June 14–24, 2023
Various venues,
Downtown Winnipeg, MB
www.jazzwinnipeg.com

MEDICINE HAT JAZZFEST
June 19–25, 2023
Various venues,
Medicine Hat, AB
www.medicinehatjazzfest.com

EDMONTON INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 23–July 2, 2023
Various venues,
Edmonton, AB
www.edmontonjazz.com

TD OTTAWA INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 23–July 2, 2023
Confederation Park
and other downtown locations,
Ottawa, ON
www.ottawajazzfestival.com

TD TORONTO JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 23–July 2, 2023
Various venues,
Toronto, ON
www.torontojazz.com

TD VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 23–July 2, 2023
40 indoor and outdoor venues,
Vancouver, BC
www.coastaljazz.ca

TD VICTORIA INTERNATIONAL JAZZFEST
June 23–July 2, 2023
Various venues,
Victoria, BC
www.jazzvictoria.ca

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE JAZZ DE MONTREAL
June 29–July 3, 2023
Downtown Montreal,
Montreal, QC
www.montrealjazzfest.com

QUEBEC CITY SUMMER FESTIVAL
July 6–16, 2023
Various venues,
Quebec City, QC
www.infofestival.com

BEACHES INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
July 6–30, 2023
Woodbine Park,
Queen Street East,
Toronto, ON
www.beachesjazz.com
QUEBEC CITY

SUMMER FESTIVAL
July 11–16, 2023
Various venues,
Quebec City, QC
www.infofestival.com

TD HALIFAX JAZZ FESTIVAL
July 14–18, 2023
Festival Tent
& other venues,
Halifax, NS
www.jazzeast.com

KASLO JAZZ FESTIVAL
August 4–6, 2023
Kaslo Bay Park,
Kaslo, BC
www.kaslojazzfest.com

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY JAZZ FESTIVAL
August 15–20, 2023
Prince Edward County,
Picton, ON
www.pecjazz.org

FESTI JAZZ INTERNATIONAL RIMOUSKI
August 31–September 3, 2023
Various venues,
Rimouski, QC
www.festijazzrimouski.com

HARVEST JAZZ & BLUES FESTIVAL
September 12–17, 2023
Downtown Fredericton,
Fredericton, NB
www.harvestjazzandblues.com

GUELPH JAZZ FESTIVAL
September 14–17, 2023
Various venues,
Guelph, ON
www.guelphjazzfestival.com

GIBSONS LANDING JAZZ FESTIVAL
2023 Dates TBD
Various venues,
Gibsons Landing, BC
www.coastjazz.com

PITTSBURGH INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
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2023 INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL GUIDE

CARIBBEAN

TOBAGO JAZZ EXPERIENCE
April 20–24, 2023
Various venues,
Tobago
www.carnifest.com/tobago-jazz-experience-tje-2023

SAINT LUCIA JAZZ FESTIVAL
May 5–14, 2023
Various venues,
Castries, Saint Lucia
www.stlucia.org/en/experiences/festivals-events/saint-lucia-jazz-festival

ARUBA SOUL BEACH MUSIC FESTIVAL
May 24–29, 2023
Various venues,
Aruba
www.aruba.com

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC JAZZ FESTIVAL
2023 Dates TBD
Various venues,
Dominican Republic
www.drjazzfestival.com

PLAZA JAZZ INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL
January 21–28, 2024
Various venues,
Havana, Cuba

CRUISES AT SEA

JAZZ FEST AT SEA
October 15–25, 2023
Aboard MSC Divina;
Boards in Miami,
Ports of call: St. John's; St. Kitts; Tortola; Guadeloupe; St. Maarten
www.jazzfestatsea.com

THE JAZZ CRUISE
January 18–25, 2024
Aboard m/s Celebrity Infinity,
Boards in Miami,
Ports of call: Costa Maya; Cozumel; Key West; Nassau
www.thejazzcruise.com

JAZZ SUPERCRUISE
February 17–24, 2024
Aboard Royal Caribbean's Independence of the Seas,
Boards in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Ports of call: Belize City, Belize; Labadee, Haiti; Roatan Island, Honduras; Cozumel, Mexico
www.capitaljazz.com/supercruise

BLUE NOTE AT SEA
2024 Dates TBD
Aboard m/s Celebrity Summit,
Boards in Miami,
Ports of call: St. Maarten; Punta Cana; Haiti
www.bluenoteatsea.com

THE SMOOTH JAZZ CRUISE
January 25–February 1, 2024 & February 1–8, 2024
Aboard m/s Celebrity Summit,
Boards in Miami,
Ports of call: Costa Maya; Cozumel; Key West; Nassau
www.thesmoothjazzcruise.com

Africa

KRIOL JAZZ FESTIVAL
April 13–15, 2023
Various venues,
Praia, Cape Verde
krioljazzfestival.com

SAINT-LOUIS JAZZ FESTIVAL
May 26–June 3, 2023
Baya Ndar,
Saint-Louis, Senegal
www.saintlouisjazz.org

STANDARD BANK JOY OF JAZZ FESTIVAL
September 22–24, 2023
Sandlon Convention Centre,
Johannesburg,
South Africa
www.joyofjazz.co.za

CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
February 23–24, 2024
Cape Town International Convention Centre,
Cape Town, South Africa
www.capetownjazzfest.com

Asia

SEOUL JAZZ FESTIVAL
May 23–28, 2023
Olympic Park,
Seoul, South Korea
www.seouljazz.co.kr

TOKYO JAZZ FESTIVAL
May (Dates TBD) 2023
NHK Hall & Yoyogi Park, Tokyo, Japan
www.tokyo-jazz.com

BORNEO JAZZ
July 7–9, 2023
City of Miri,
Sarawak, Borneo
www.jazzborneo.com

JERUSALEM JAZZ FESTIVAL
July (Dates TBD) 2023
Israel Museum,
Jerusalem, Israel
Jerusalemjazzfestival.org.il

JAKARTA INTERNATIONAL JAVA JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 2–4, 2023
Jakarta International Expo,
Kemayoran, Central Jakarta
www.javajazzfestival.com

BAKU INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
October 6–15, 2023
Various venues,
Baku, Azerbaijan
Bakujazzfestival.com

RED SEA JAZZ FESTIVAL
2023 Dates TBD
Eilat Harbor,
Elat, Israel
redseajazzeilat.com

JAZZMANDU
2023 Dates TBD
Various venues in the Kathmandu Valley,
Kathmandu, Nepal
www.jazzmandu.com

THAILAND INTERNATIONAL JAZZ CONFERENCE
January 28–30, 2024
Mahidol University College of Music.
Bangkok, Thailand
Music.mahidol.ac.th/tijc

Australia

ADELAIDE JAZZ FESTIVAL
April 28–30, 2023
Various venues,
Adelaide, SA
www.adelaidejazzfest.com.au

CASTLEMAINE JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 9–11, 2023
Various venues,
Castlemaine, VIC
www.castlemainejazzfestival.com.au

BRISBANE VOCAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
August (Dates TBD) 2023
Brisbane Jazz Club,
Brisbane, QL
www.brisbanevocaljazzfestival.com.au

DEVONPORT JAZZ FESTIVAL
July 27–30, 2023
Various venues,
Devonport, TAS
www.devonportjazz.com.au

MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
October 13–22, 2021
Various venues,
Melbourne, VIC
www.melbournejazz.com

PERTH INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
November 3–5, 2023
Various venues,
Perth, WA
Perthjazzfest.com

BRISBANE INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
2023 Dates TBD
Various venues,
Brisbane, QL
www.bijf.com.au

Europe

CULLY JAZZ FESTIVAL
April 14–22, 2023
Cully, Switzerland
www.cullyjazz.ch

TALLINN INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL JAZZKAAR
April 23–30, 2023
Tallinn, Tartu, Pärnu, Viljandi, Narva, Estonia
www.jazzkaar.ee

CHELTENHAM JAZZ FESTIVAL
April 26–May 1, 2023
Montpellier Gardens,
Cheltenham, UK
www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/jazz

CITY OF DERRY JAZZ AND BIG BAND FESTIVAL
April 27–May 1, 2023
City of Derry/Londonderry,
Derry, Northern Ireland, UK
www.cityofderryjazzfestival.com

JAZZFEST BONN
May 1–14, 2023
Bonn, Germany
www.jazzfest-bonn.de

THE BATH FESTIVAL
May 12–21, 2023
Bath, UK
www.bathfestivals.org.uk

MOERS JAZZ FEST
May 26–29, 2023
Moers, Germany
www.moers-festival.de

NATTJAZZ BERGEN
May 26–June 3, 2023
USF Verftet,
Bergen, Norway
www.nattjazz.no

FESTIVAL DE JAZZ DE VITORIA-GASTEIZ
June 3–9, 2023
Various venues,
Vitoria, Spain
www.jazzvitoria.com

GLASGOW JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 16–19, 2023
Various venues,
Glasgow, UK
www.jazzfest.co.uk

RIVERBOAT JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 21–25, 2023
River Gudenåen,
Silkeborg, Denmark
www.riverboat.dk

DJANGO REINHARDT FESTIVAL
June 22–25, 2023
Parc du Chateau,
Fontainebleau, France
www.festivaldjangoreinhardt.com

JAZZASCONA
June 22–July 1, 2023
Various venues,
Ascona, Switzerland
www.jazzascona.ch/en

AARHUS JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 24–July 1, 2023
Various venues,
Aarhus, Denmark
www.jazzfest.dk

JAZZ À VIENNE
June 28–July 13, 2023
Roman Theatre,
Vienne, France
www.jazzavienne.com

KALOTT JAZZ & BLUES FESTIVAL
June 30–July 1, 2023
Various venues,
Tornio, Finland
www.kalottjazzblues.net

JAZZ IN THE PARK CLUJ NAPOCA
June 30–July 2, 2023
Central Park Cuj,
Napoca Cluj, Romania
www.jazzinthepark.ro

COPENHAGEN JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 30–July 9, 2023
Various venues,
Copenhagen, Denmark
www.jazz.dk

MONTREUX JAZZ FESTIVAL
June 30–July 15, 2023
Auditorium Stravinski,
Miles Davis Hall, Seaside,
Montreux, Switzerland
www.montreuxjazz.com

FUNCHAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
June (Dates TBD) 2023
Parque de Santa Catarina, Funchal,
Madeira, Portugal
www.funchaljazzfestival.org

2023 INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL GUIDE

KONGSBERG JAZZ FESTIVAL
July 5–8, 2023
Various venues,
Kongsberg, Norway
www.kongsberg-jazzfestival.no

NORTH SEA JAZZ FESTIVAL
July 7–9, 2023
Ahoy, Rotterdam, Netherlands
www.northseajazz.com

MOSTLY JAZZ, FUNK & SOUL FESTIVAL
July 7–9, 2023
Moseley Park,
Birmingham, UK
www.mostlyjazz.co.uk

BUCHAREST INTERNATIONAL JAZZ COMPETITION & FESTIVAL
July 7–15, 2023
Concert halls and jazz clubs
Bucharest, Romania
www.jazzcompetition.ro

PORI JAZZ FESTIVAL
July 7–15, 2023
Various venues,
Pori, Finland
www.porijazz.fi

UMBRIA JAZZ
July 7–16, 2023
Various venues,
Perugia, Umbria, Italy
www.umbriajazz.com

JAZZ OPEN STUTTGART
July 13–23, 2023
Various venues,
Stuttgart, Germany
www.jazzopen.com

SOUILLAC EN JAZZ
July 15–22, 2023
Various Venues,
Souillac, France
www.souillacenjazz.fr

JAZZ IN MARCIAC
July 20–August 5, 2023
Marciac, France
www.jazzinmarciac.com

HEINEKEN JAZZALDIA
July 21–25, 2023
Plaza Trinidad
and Kursaal,
San Sebastian, Spain
www.jazzaldia.com

BOHEMIA JAZZFEST
July (Dates TBD) 2023
Prague and other cities,
Czech Republic
www.bohemiajazzfest.com

JAZZ À JUAN
July (Dates TBD) 2023
Juan-Les-Pins, France
www.jazzajuan.com

EUROPAFEST
July (Dates TBD) 2023
Auditorium Hall,
Bucharest, Romania
www.europafest.ro

YSTAD SWEDEN JAZZ FESTIVAL
August 2–5, 2023
Ystad, Sweden
www.ystadjazz.se

BRECON JAZZ FESTIVAL
August 6–20, 2023
Brecon, UK
www.breconjazz.com

SILDAJAZZ
August 9–13, 2023
Various venues,
Haugesund, Norway
www.sildajazz.no

OSLO JAZZ FESTIVAL
August 13–19, 2023
Various venues,
Oslo, Norway
www.oslojazz.no

INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL SAALFELDEN
August 17–20, 2023
Various venues,
Saalfelden, Austria
www.jazzsaalfelden.at

RENDEZ-VOUS DE L'ERDRE FESTIVAL
August 28–September 3, 2023
On the Erdre's banks,
Nantes, Loire Atlantique,
France
www.rendezvouserdre.com

JAZZ FESTIVAL WILLISAU
August 30–September 3, 2023
Festhalle,
Willisau, Switzerland
www.jazzwillisau.ch

ISLE OF WIGHT JAZZ WEEKEND
September 14–17, 2023
Isle of Wight, UK
www.iwjazzweekend.co.uk

SCARBOROUGH JAZZ FESTIVAL
September 22–24, 2023
Scarborough Spa,
Scarborough, UK
www.scarboroughspa.co.uk/scarborough-jazz-festival-2023

JAZZ & THE CITY
October 12–15, 2023
Various venues,
Salzburg, Austria
www.salzburgjazz.com

STOCKHOLM JAZZ FESTIVAL
October 13–22, 2023
Various venues,
Stockholm, Sweden
www.stockholmjazz.com

GUINNESS CORK INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
October 26–30, 2023
Various venues,
Cork City, Ireland
www.guinessjazzfestival.com

JAZZTAGE DRESDEN
November 4–17, 2023
Dresden, Germany
www.jazztage-dresden.de

JAZZFEST BERLIN
November 2–5, 2023
Haus der Berliner
Festspiele, Berlin, Germany
www.berlinerfestspiele.de/jazzfest

TAMPERE JAZZ HAPPENING
November 2–5, 2023
Various venues,
Tampere, Finland
www.tampere.fi/jazz

WHITLEY BAY INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
November 3–5, 2023
Village Hotel & Leisure Center
North Tyneside, UK
www.whitleybayjazzfest.com

GUIMARÃES JAZZ FESTIVAL
November 11–20, 2023
Vila Flor Centro Cultural,
Guimarães, Portugal
www.guimaraesjazz.pt

BARCELONA VOLL-DAMM INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
2023 Dates TBD
Various venues,
Barcelona, Spain
www.barcelonajazzfestival.com

GOTTINGER JAZZ FESTIVAL
2023 Dates TBD
Deutsches Theater,
Kulturzentrum Musa,
Gottinger, Germany
www.jazzfestival-goettingen.de

ENJOY JAZZ
2023 Dates TBD
Mannheim, Heidelberg,
Ludwigshafen & Heilbronn,
Germany
www.enjoyjazz.de

JAZZ FEST WIEN-VIENNA
2023 Dates TBD
Various venues,
Vienna, Austria
www.viennajazz.org

ISTANBUL INTERNATIONALJAZZ FESTIVAL
2023 Dates TBD
Various venues,
Istanbul, Turkey
www.iksv.org

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1. Apple AirPods Pro (2nd generation); 2. Loop Experience earplugs; 3. Etymotic Research ER20 earplugs; 4. Earasers Music Max Plus; 5. Etymotic Research ER20XS earplugs.

Do Jazz Fans Need Hearing Protection?

Apple's latest AirPods Pro claim to protect hearing. Does the technology work — and do jazz fans need it?

BY BRENT BUTTERWORTH

Hearing loss now affects 15% of American adults, and according to researchers at Johns Hopkins University, that number is expected to rise to 22% by 2060. Fortunately, awareness of the problem is also rising, which is why Apple recently earned praise for including a hearing-protection feature in its latest-generation AirPods Pro true wireless earbuds.

Like many earbuds equipped with noise canceling, the new AirPods Pro have a "transparency" mode that uses tiny microphones to pick up outside sounds, then amplifies the sounds and plays them through the earbuds, so you can carry on conversations while listening to music. In the new AirPods Pro, Apple limits the maximum volume in transparency mode to 85 decibels (dB), which is the level that hearing scientists consider safe for about eight hours of continuous exposure. So, in theory, if you wear the AirPods Pro to a concert and put them in transparency mode, you're safe.

However, I was able to run some tests on the new AirPods Pro and found that in extremely loud conditions — like the 105 dB levels one might experience at a rock concert — enough sound leaked past the AirPods Pros that your eardrums could experience dangerous volumes of around 95 dB, which could damage your hearing after about an hour.

But, of course, a performance by, say, the Ron Carter Trio doesn't come anywhere near the levels of a show by The Weeknd or Metallica. When I did my tests, for a website with a general audience, my advice was, "Don't rely on your AirPods for hearing protection at concerts." As I was writing that, though, I realized that jazz fans face a very different situation — and need different advice.

IT MIGHT *NOT* GET LOUD

It quickly dawned on me that I wouldn't even think about attending a rock performance without a set of earplugs at the ready. But in decades of attending jazz concerts, I've only felt the need for earplugs a few times — specifically, at big-band and fusion gigs, and in situations where a large PA system was used. If I'm going to a typical jazz club, hearing mostly acoustic instruments with maybe a small PA for the horns or vocals, it doesn't even dawn on me to bring hearing protection, and I can't remember having done so even once in my 11 years living in New York City.

2.

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5.

I have, on occasion, measured the sound-pressure level at jazz performances, and it typically maxes out around 85 to 90 dB, which isn't a real concern for a performance that lasts a couple of hours — especially considering that the performance will likely have quiet passages and breaks between tunes.

But what if a Buddy Rich-style big band is playing or a fusion group with big guitar amps and a double-bass-drum kit? In these cases, there's a simple guideline you can follow: If you have to raise your voice to be heard clearly at an arm's length, the level is probably over 85 dB, and you need to think about protecting your hearing.

PICKING A PLUG

Protecting your hearing while preserving your enjoyment of concert can be a challenge, though. The problem is that earplugs change the sound. Usually, they muffle the upper midrange and treble, frequencies that are critical for understanding vocals, appreciating the tone of horn players, and picking up on the swing from the drummer's ride cymbal.

Those foam earplugs available at hardware stores can attenuate upper midrange and treble by more than 20 dB, which can make Chris Potter's tenor sound like he wrapped it in a blanket. A better solution is musicians' earplugs, such as Etymotic Research ETYPlugs ($14) and Earasers Music Max Plus ($40), which are available at music stores and online. These protect your ears while letting some high frequencies through. There are many different designs, all of which work but some of which might not fit you well. In my opinion, the safest bet is the Loop Experience ($30), which comes with interchangeable ear tips in four sizes, so you're practically assured of a secure, comfortable fit.

Truth be told, if you have a set of Apple's latest AirPods Pro earbuds—or any other set of true wireless earbuds with a transparency mode—those will probably work fine as hearing protectors at jazz shows. One advantage of these is that people often carry them everywhere they go, so they are less likely to forget them—and less likely to have to stuff their ears with torn-up cocktail napkins in a desperate (and marginally effective) attempt to protect their hearing at a loud show.

It's a very wise idea for any music fan—even jazz fans—to invest in a set of musicians' earplugs. When you consider the low cost, and the greater likelihood that you'll be able to enjoy music well into old age, they're a bargain.

WHAT SOUNDS DAMAGE HEARING?

Although it's counterintuitive, loud bass tones aren't as damaging to your ears as higher-frequency sounds are; in fact, most hearing loss occurs at frequencies above 2 kilohertz. The most dangerous sounds come from loud, higher-pitched instruments, such as trumpets, snare drums, crash cymbals, and electric guitars. That's why they make special hearing protectors for drummers. ***JT***

Jamming in Realtime, Online

A new hardware/software combo is taking the latency out of online audio

BY EMILE MENASCHÉ

Remote practicing and teaching may have become a necessity during COVID, but even as we go back to a sort of normal, the idea of being able to jam, rehearse, or teach from different locations has plenty of appeal. If you have a webcam and a decent audio interface, it should work, right?

But as anyone who's tried to find the groove over Zoom can tell you, web tools designed for sales meetings don't quite cut it when trying to play music. Fast Wi-Fi is often too slow. Even if you plug your computer into Ethernet, the round-trip between your audio interface and that of your remote partner is enough to put you behind the beat—and not in a good way.

Enter **RealTime Audio**, a platform that's designed to reduce latency to as low as 8 to 25 milliseconds between similarly equipped musicians within about 1,000 miles of one another. The company says the system offers "seamless communication and social interaction" with bandmates or students via its RealTime Audio app.

Requirements include an Ethernet adapter for internet access (with recommended maximum ping time between users of 30 milliseconds), and USB 3.0 to connect with your audio interface.

The hardware part of the solution is a device called the **RealTime Portal**, which acts as a bridge between your audio interface and the internet. You plug your mics and/or instruments into your USB audio interface, then plug that into the RealTime Portal. The Portal then connects to the internet via Ethernet, streaming your audio to your partner's Portal/interface setup.

The compact unit features a Rockchip RK3399 64-bit six-core processor, a two GB SD card, and built-in Ethernet. Power is via USB C. There are two USB 3 ports for interface connections. It all fits in a pretty small package of around 4" x 5.3" x 1.24" and weighs just under nine ounces.

Working in partnership with MatchMySound.com, RealTime Portal's virtually lag-free audio can be combined with high-quality video for teaching and performance analysis. The company reports that its tech is being adopted by educators in the U.S. and overseas, with major companies like School of Rock, Fender Play, and others using the technology in its remote and online educational programs. Price includes a one-year subscription to the webcam app necessary for the system to function.

$299 | realtimeaudio.com

5 PRIMO PICKS

Rising 'Tide

Eventide's **H90 Harmonizer** pedal builds on the legacy of the popular H9 by adding more routing, more control, a bigger display, and 10 new algorithms. Larger than the H9 Max, the H90 is designed to bring more of the power of Eventide's flagship H9000 rack unit to a stage-friendly form factor. In addition to 62 algorithms (including new effects like Polyphony and Bouquet Delay and more), the H90 boasts an expanded control set with five push knobs, seven LED buttons, and three footswitches. There's also a pair of mono inserts to integrate with the rest of your rig, a pair of expression pedal connections, and USB/Bluetooth for remote editing. The high-res OLED display also makes it easier to make changes at the pedal itself, though like the H9, the H90 has a software editor for even more detailed tweaking.

$899 | Eventideaudio.com

Arise, Sire

The latest addition to **Sire**'s line of Larry Carlton signature models is the **H7V,** a semi-hollow import inspired by the classic Gibson that earned Carlton his "Mr. 335" nickname. Features include a flame maple body in classic double cutaway design and a C-shaped mahogany neck. The 22-fret, 24.75"-scale ebony fingerboard is 1.69" wide at the bone nut and has a 12" radius. Hardware includes premium die-cast tuners, tune-o-matic style bridge, and stop-bar tailpiece combination. Perhaps surprisingly for those who associate Carlton's tone with humbuckers, the H7V sports a pair of Sire Larry Carlton Vintage Dogear P-90 single coils, with individual volume and tone controls for each. The H7V finish options include vintage or cherry sunburst and black (the last option is slightly more expensive).

$705 | sire-usa.com

Keys to the Highway

The **Roland FP-E50** is designed with the solo gigging musician in mind. Starting with realistic digital piano sounds and an 88-key hammer-action keyboard, the FP-E50 adds a range of other instruments as well as intelligent arranging features for solo performance and composition.

In addition to hundreds of onboard sounds, including 14 acoustic and 25 electric pianos, strings, drums and more, the FP-E50 sports a mic input that lets you add vocals with effects (including real-time harmonies) to go with your auto-generated backing tracks. Other features include Bluetooth audio and MIDI, computer connectivity, expansion via Roland Cloud, and onboard recording—all at a weight under 38 lbs.

$999 | rolandus.com

Sonic Sphere

Need a mic locker but only have room for one mic? You might want to check out **Universal Audio**'s **Sphere DLX** microphone modeling system. The hardware/software system combines a high-tech large-diaphragm condenser mic with software models that are designed to capture the sonic attributes of 38 classic mics from the likes of Neumann, Telefunken, AKG, Sony, and others. (There's also an LX version with 20 mic models). Both Sphere models simulate ribbon, condenser, and dynamic mics, and Universal reports very low latency when used with its Apollo interfaces.

$1,499 (LX $999) uaudio.com

Totable Throne

If packing your gear feels like 3D Tetris, anything that saves space in the car or van is a plus. **Gibraltar**'s **4608 Compact Drum Throne** is designed to offer comfort and stability in a compact package. Described as "fully functional" yet "minimalist, the 4608 is height-adjustable, has memory lock, and is supported by folding tripod legs. Despite the Gibraltar's small footprint when folded, the vinyl covered, foam-padded seat is big enough for most posteriors at 15.5" wide. Height can be adjusted between 15 and 21 inches, with the memory lock making it easy to find your preferred height during setup. The double-braced legs are tipped with grippy non-slip ends for stability while in action.

$64.99 | gibraltarhardware.com

TIME MARCHES ON

Jason Moran's latest fuses jazz's past and present

JASON MORAN

From the Dancehall to the Battlefield

Yes

His spoken summation (over a vamping 10-piece band) of 1910s ragtime/jazz bandleader James Reese Europe's life, career, and contributions might have become a lecture. But addressing jazz's musical and social history without it feeling pedantic is one of Jason Moran's superpowers. His introduction to the magnificent From the *Dancehall* to the *Battlefield* becomes a meditation about context, place, and liberation in African American music.

But neither is Mozran all pensiveness and arty reflection: The abovementioned "context" means remembering that Europe's idiom was a social, festive, dancing one. Hence the horn-filled romps of "Russian Rag" and "Memphis Blues," both deploying two-step ragtime beats and New Orleans polyphony, along with the more somber "All of No Man's Land Is Ours" and "Clef Club March."

They never feel like museum pieces — partly because Moran lets in contemporary nuances, like his dark ambient composition "Tear" or the moody, musique-concrete-like setting for Logan Richardson's alto saxophone feature on "St. Louis Blues." But just as often, simply because Moran lets them be lively and fun. That's how we end up with pieces like "That Moaning Trombone," which features not a note from the rhythm section (Moran, bassist Tarus Mateen, and drummer Nasheet Waits — the longstanding Bandwagon trio) yet grooves as hard as anything.

At its best, *Dancehall* combines those old- and new-school currents. The fusion of the traditional hymn "Flee as a Bird to the Mountain" with Albert Ayler's "Ghost" (with a charged Brian Settles on tenor) is stunning; Moran's enmeshing of the early jazz standard "Ballin' the Jack" with Geri Allen's "Feed the Fire," though, is a stroke of genius. It has all the weight of history, the ease of familiarity, the joy of rhythm, and a palpable reminder that Europe's 100-year-old rhythmic ideas are still fresh and relevant.

—MICHAEL J. WEST

DAVE LIEBMAN

Live at Smalls

SmallsLIVE/Cellar Music

Soprano saxophonist and flutist Dave Liebman's latest live album is billed as "a new phase for the NEA jazz master, one that is focused on free improvisation." But if those last two words connote aimlessness or amorphousness to you, *Live at Smalls* — recorded at the titular West Village basement club in January 2022 — will act as a corrective.

While there is no previously composed music on this set — delineated as "The Beginning," "The Middle," and "The End"— Live at Smalls nonetheless hurtles forward with a crystal-clear sense of purpose. Part of this is due to the caliber of Liebman and the musicians augmenting him: incisive trumpeter Peter Evans, versatile pianist Leo Genovese, supple bassist John Hébert, and drummer Tyshawn Sorey — a widely revered maestro with a 360-degree vantage toward his accompanists.

Throughout *Live at Smalls*, the quintet frequently veers *out* but remains incredibly listenable — partly as per the stellar recording quality at the club, but mostly due to the pedigree of these globally

respected musicians.

Liebman has been in the game for more than half a century. His storied discography stretches back to Miles Davis' deconstructionist classic *On the Corner* and beyond; he's been recording since he was 16. If *Live at Smalls* is the gateway to this new phase in this jazz lifer's development, the jazz community is in for a treat. Indeed, far more than a treat: it's our honor to bear witness.

—MORGAN ENOS

JOSH LAWRENCE

And That Too

Posi-Tone

A striving for "perfect imperfection," as Josh Lawrence terms it, with a focus on mostly unrehearsed first takes and no edits, was the modus operandi for the recording of *And That Too*. It's the trumpeter-composer's fifth album as a leader and one of two he recorded, along with *Call Time*, in spring 2021. Lawrence indeed brings a freshness and sense of immediacy to five of his originals and two by tenor saxophonist Willie Morris, a pal from Juilliard grad school, along with Wayne Shorter's "Nefertiti."

Lawrence, who also has co-led the Fresh Cut Orchestra and played with Orrin Evans' Captain Black Big Band and a variety of R&B artists,

opens strong with the quickly stated theme and bracing forward motion of Morris's eight-minute-plus "Grit," the first of several extended showcases for the energetic, inquisitive soloing of the trumpeter and saxophonist. Posi-Tone bass regular Boris Kozlov and drummer Jason Tiemann, sans piano at first, drive the hard-swinging propulsion behind Morris on his "Hole in the Wall," also another opportunity for Lawrence to demonstrate his chops and knack for taking solos in unexpected directions.

A pretty, relaxed take on the Shorter tune, voiced by muted trumpet, makes a pleasant contrast with the uptempo material. Lawrence's spritely bop burner "Cosmological Constant," one of several tracks featuring the informal Posi-Tone house rhythm section of Kozlov, pianist Art Hirahara, and drummer Rudy Royston, gets its kicks from loads of rhythmic pushing and pulling and a stellar Hirahara solo. The leader's "Black Keys," composed solely on a piano's black keys, is built in part on call-and-response among trumpet, sax, and piano. And his "Cantus Firmus," also featuring muted trumpet, is moody and laidback before it shifts to a hard-driving mode. It makes for a fitting chill-down closer.

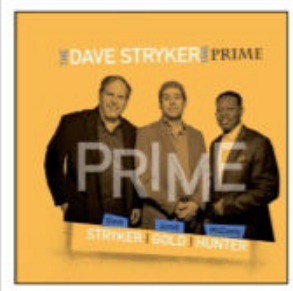
—PHILIP BOOTH

DAVE STRYKER TRIO

Prime

Strikezone

"Stryker" is a fine name for a guitarist, and Dave is one of the best out there. His large discography as a leader (over 40 titles) contains a killing series, *Eight Track I, II, and III*, that covers classic pop songs from the 1970s. In 2019, he even added a Christmas album to the series. The albums added a prominent vibraphonist (Stefon Harris or Steve Nelson) to Stryker's working trio (organist Jared Gold, drummer McClenty Hunter). *Prime* is the first recording by this trio alone, a band that



has been road-tested for 12 years.

Full disclosure: There was initial disappointment in these quarters that Stryker's new album is not *Eight Track IV*. He is an inspired interpreter of fondly remembered songs from your reviewer's mis-

spent youth. On Prime, Stryker reverts to doing what almost everybody else does (whether they are interesting composers or not): performing originals.

As one listens, disappointment fades. While it is true that the compositions, with their familiar earthy grooves, could have come from many organ trios, the devil is in the details. The guitarist who leads this ensemble derives a striking (no pun intended) number of substantive detailed ideas from the unremarkable opening themes. As for Gold, he is one of the most musical organists in jazz. Together, these two can take off and fly (the exhilarating title track); create fresh, elegant decorations for "I Should Care" (the only standard); or get down and dirty ("Captain Jack"). On "Dude's Lounge," they incorporate all of the above virtues into one track. Stryker offers a rapt *a cappella* prologue. Gold burns. Then those two drop off, and McClenty finds himself alone, solely responsible for sustaining the funky, insidious beat. He nails it. *Prime* is cool, and Stryker should still make Eight Track IV.

—THOMAS CONRAD

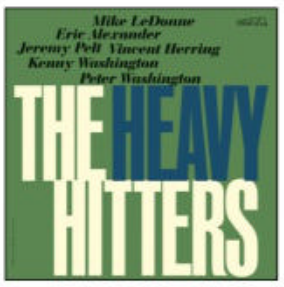
THE HEAVY HITTERS

The Heavy Hitters

Cellar Music

Tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander and pianist Mike LeDonne have developed a notable bond over the past quarter of a century, building on a shared affinity for bop and its soulful, daring, and dynamic offshoots. Capitalizing on that relationship and those musical preferences with this first co-led endeavor, they've assembled a murderers' row of veteran musicians that more than lives up to The Heavy Hitters name.

Directing a sextet featuring alto saxophonist Vincent Herring, trumpeter Jeremy Pelt, bassist Peter Washington, and drummer Kenny Washington, Alexander and LeDonne deliver an all-original program that recalls a classic Blue Note sound and sensibility. Some may attribute said association in part to the fact that the music was recorded at the late Rudy Van Gelder's studio or simply acknowledge a specific aim or intention for the set to land in that zone. But the more basic truth is that these men —



classic modernists, the lot of them — have been throwing down like this for as long as they've been out there, and few can touch them.

Paying tribute to forebears proves to be something of a theme on this set. "Hub" — the first of six LeDonne numbers — brings the take-no-prisoners stance of Freddie Hubbard right to the surface. The hip and catchy "Silverdust" is a feel-good joint that speaks volumes about Horace Silver's vibe. And "Cedar Land"—a contrafact on Cedar Walton's "Holy Land"—swings with spirituality and vitality. Alexander, offering three compositions for the program, switches to alto to honor his late father on reflective ballad "Big Richard" and builds atop a chord progression spawned from the fertile mind of George Coleman to create "This Is Something New." With strong writing and soloing at every turn, and a we-mean-business attitude at its core, *The Heavy Hitters* makes a serious impression.

—DAN BILAWSKY

BENNY CARTER

Jazz Giant

Craft

The extraordinary Benny Carter made his mark on jazz as one of its most even-tempered and consistently remarkable composers, interpreters, arrangers, and saxophonists, blowing alto at the age of 90 with the same passion, nuance, and invention as he did in his youth. *Jazz Giant* lives up to its title: an intimate but epic, 1957–58-recorded, bop-swing jam session with a mighty septet including guitarist Barney Kessel, drummer Shelly Manne, pianist André Previn, and tenor titan Ben Webster.

Carter, showing off skills as a mournful blue trumpeter on the neo-Dixieland shuffle

"I'm Coming Virginia," nestles into a groove provided by double bassist Leroy Vinnegar and a twanging Kessel before Webster enters the fray with his own warm and supple sadness. Every time Carter and Webster link up on *Jazz Giant,* it's a gorgeous moment worth savoring as each man pushes the other to new heights (and lows) of subtle stylization.

"Blue Lou" comes in like a roaring bop lion and simmers cooly until its close with Manne's percolating pulse keeping the session heated. The mellow, sophisticated stroll of "A Walkin' Thing" — one of two Carter compositions here — has the cosmopolitan, cinematic sway of some his television themes (e.g., The *Name of the Game*, *Ironsides*) with solid solos from trombonist Frank Rosolino, Previn, and Kessel at his quirkiest. No solo is more quietly complex and charming than Carter's, a sound so snake-charmingly serene but strong and sensual. The other Carter composition, "How Can You Lose," rocks out at its start with Kessel's free flying fretboard at its kinkiest before settling into a portrait of tasteful decorum and filmic tension. Of note is how Carter's compositions benefit from the onset of rock-and-roll energy in 1957, with a nervous swagger and elevated raw energy

—A.D. AMOROSI

DAVID AKE

Green Thumb

Posi-tone

No one will ever accuse David Ake of being "sprightly." With his clear intonation, his chord choices, and his preferred rhythms, the pianist is almost always a source of rich deliberation. That's probably because Ake is a composer foremost, a versatile tunesmith of nuanced originality.

Ake has also been deliberate about the timing of his album releases. But after cutting only six records since 1998, he is back with *Green Thumb*, taken from the same sessions in the spring of 2021 that produced last year's Slingshot. But where the earlier album contained a series of solo and duet performances with bassist Boris Kozlov, *Green Thumb* adds saxophonist Tony

Malaby and drummer Rudy Royston to the mix. Ake says he envisioned Malaby playing on the title song even as he was composing it, and the tenor's edginess—urgent but not strenuous—neatly depicts the "green thumb" ambiance of spring and post-COVID activity.

Ake is always good for a couple of off-kilter numbers. The composer describes the implacable "Stu's News" as having an "Ornette Coleman-style head," a deft, knotty but undifferentiated groove that the rhythm section dispatches with aplomb before Malaby's lag-and-tug solo further cements the Ornette connection. "Slingshot" has its own internal logic, like MC Escher making origami.

The two cover songs vary greatly in their fidelity and approach. "All The Things You Are" is reharmonized and recalibrated as if in a different orbit, familiar only in passing sweeps of the melody. For the closer, "But Beautiful," Ake provided Malaby, frequently an outcast renegade, with the chance to inhabit the swoon of a standard—his gift to Malaby and to us listeners.

—BRITT ROBSON

EDITOR'S PICK

JO LAWRY

Acrobats

Whirlwind

A prominent jazz writer recently tweeted that he'd received a copy of Jo Lawry's new album Acrobats and immediately put the unopened CD on the discard pile upon realizing that it featured the vocalist backed only by bass and drums. To each his own, but curiosity alone induced me to take a listen, wondering how the daredevil Australian singer would fare on her first new release in a decade.

My conclusion was that prejudice against vocalists plunging into a profoundly exposed setting could mean missing out on some exhilarating music, particularly when the singer is joined by insuperable, high-flying companions like bassist *Linda May Han Oh* and drummer Allison Miller. Acrobats features a beguiling mix of reimagined standards and idiosyncratic selections, like the bass/vocal soft-shoe through "Takes Two to Tango" and a persuasively rockin' version of "You're The Voice," a pop anthem by Australian megastar John Farnham. The album opens with a rarely heard Frank Loesser gem, "Travelling Light," that establishes Lawry's ability to phrase like a horn while maintaining firm narrative control. Lawry's original title track is another thrilling performance paced by Miller, who provides supple, spacious support playing the kit with what sounds like her bare hands.

The album builds to a *Guys and Dolls* medley that combines the rapturous "My Time of Day" (featuring another exquisite Loesser verse) and a sinewy sprint through "I've Never Been in Love Before" (songs largely absent from the film of the musical, minimizing Marlon Brando's vocal exposure). With her clear, bright tone, Lawry's scatting on the concluding "If I Were a Bell" is a gauntlet-toss statement, less interested in the song's detailed imagery than in maintaining headlong momentum. It may be harmonically barebones, but *Acrobats* is mighty easy to like.

—ANDREW GILBERT

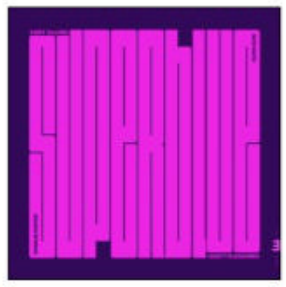
KURT ELLING & CHARLIE HUNTER FEATURING NATE SMITH

Guilty Pleasures

Edition

On first listen, our hero sounded a lot like Tom Jones on these five new tunes (not counting guitarist Nate Smith's "Bounce," an instrumental thrown in, well, because our hero apparently felt that was a fine and mighty notion). Which fits, actually, because Tom Jones himself is a) completely shameless, and b) actually (usually) comes up with the nuts. Our singer doesn't seem the least bit inhibited and indeed, the set comes across spiritually (not technically) like a Tuesday night out at karaoke.

In order (not counting "Bounce"), then: Eddie Money's "Baby Hold On" comes over less pleading, more grounded than the original; a confidence in Elling's grit that the



lady will fact come back to him sure as that ball on the Bo-Lo Bouncer. "Wrap It Up," from Sam and Dave, unfolds with Smith's funkiest drumming but finds our singer satiated, leaning back in that simmering barbecue sauce of satisfaction and ladling on his own background vocals. "Boogie Down," a signature tune for Al Jarreau, strips away the original's signature riff and replaces it with another signature riff, plus some tasty multi-tracked scatting (and the set's otherwise scant on scat). PJ Morton's "Sticking To My Guns" finds the fellows having a little too much fun, mocking death and a few other heavy concepts in the name of sweaty positivity.

From positivity to… a hit man? That's right, "Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap," from AC/DC. Realizing that he can't out-overact Bon Scott on the original (who was having a little too much fun of a different sort), the man on the mic sings it proud and loud (like Tom Jones) but matter-of-fact practical. Not a monster, not a menace. A businessman, talking simple business. Somehow, I'm shuddering.

—ANDREW HAMLIN

DELFEAYO MARSALIS & UPTOWN JAZZ ORCHESTRA

Uptown on Mardi Gras Day

Troubadour Jass

At the risk of overstating things or glossing over socioeconomic challenges, even an occasional visitor can't help but pick up on the *joie de vivre* that seems to emanate from the streets of New Orleans, particularly during Mardi Gras. Delfeayo Marsalis, the trombone-playing member of the city's first family of jazz, handily captures that friendly all-access vibe on #Uptown on Mardi Gras Day#, gathering a famous sibling and a roomful of regular musical compadres for galvanizing takes on Crescent City favorites.

Marsalis and trumpeter-singer Andrew Baham turn in a mix of big band and small-group arrangements. The underappreciated trombonist gets in some well-used solo space on his tunes "Uptown

Boogie" and "Midnight at the Zulu Ball," and the familiar "Mardi Gras Mambo" — a second, closing version of which gets a lift from solos by Branford Marsalis on soprano sax and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith. Branford, on tenor, also enlivens a rousing version of the Professor Longhair classic "Big Chief," with Glen David Andrews out front on exuberant vocals and whistling, and "Uptown Boogie."

Other New Orleans favorites are here, too, including Al Johnson's alternately swinging and two-beat grooving "Carnival Time," led by Bahan's vocals and featuring Roderick Paulin's tenor solo; the Wild Magnolias' deeply funky "New Suit," juiced with Amari Ansari's limber alto sax; and the Meters' rollicking "They All Ask'd for You," with Andrews singing and Scott Frock soloing on trumpet. In the same vein is the title track, a rowdy original that name-checks local sights and sounds. "I'm going uptown, to lose my soul," sings Tonya Boyd-Cannon, who co-wrote the tune with Delfeayo. "I'm going uptown, where it's purple with the green and gold." Will it become a new Mardi Gras standard? Time will tell.

—PHILIP BOOTH

BRANDON ROSS

Of Sight and Sound

Sunnyside

Brandon Ross fits the mold of a multi-dimensional guitar hero but a decidedly understated one. In the long-running jazz/rock power trio Harriet Tubman, Ross embraces his inner shredder, setting off an attack that suggests Sonny Sharrock, Jimi Hendrix, and Ornette Coleman. But it's Ross's flair for veering from those fretboard-hopping pyrotechnics for the subtly abstract, navigating entrancing and liquid soundscapes that place him on a whole other level of guitar wizardry. Those fluid dynamics are beautifully fleshed out on *Of Sight and Sound.* A cross-disciplinary set with the electronics-minded group Pendulum, it's a living, breathing encapsulation of its title.

Ross's liner notes call the set "a sonic mandala… Image and sound embedded in the essence of two mutually realized forms." *Of Sight And Sound* documents those converging mediums through a collaboration

that saw Ross and Pendulum and neo-symbolist artist Ford Crull join forces to create a multimedia experience that connects live music and live painting.

Ross and Pendulum (bassist Kevin Ross, drummer Chris Eddleton, and sound design artist Hardedge) create a richly layered swirl of droney textures and patterns that ostensibly correspond to the incandescent splatter of Crull's reds, blacks, and yellows, works that grace the album art. The rhythm section of Kevin Ross (Brandon's brother) and Eddleton serves as the sonic guiding light to Ross and Hardedge's resonant tones, reverb-bathed alien transmittals, and electronics-driven manipulations that send the listener into a transfixed state, akin to getting lost in the details of a painting. Sprawling compositions such as "First Yellow Icon," "Black Illumination," and the title track are evidence of the meditative and gripping effect the album — and art — convey. That shapeshifting quality is what makes the Ross and Pendulum/Crull partnership so special: *Of Sight And Sound* is a mind-altering probe of sound and vision that sublimely complement one another.

—BRAD COHAN

ERIKA KAPIN PHOTOGRAPHY

RALPH ALESSI QUARTET

It's Always Now

ECM

On the evidence of his extensive body of work as a leader and sideman, Ralph Alessi is one of the most skilled trumpet improvisers in jazz. Many trumpet players' urgency to communicate gets ahead of their chops. Not Alessi. He executes his ideas with confident precision.

The question is whether those ideas will interest a broad range of listeners. His music leans toward idiosyncratic forms and rigorous intellectual austerity. On pieces like "Diagonal Lady," his cryptic lines veer unpredictably in free air, and pianist Florian Weber responds with spare fragmentary chords. The more intense and complex songs, like "Everything Mirrors Everything" and "Hanging by a Thread," sound twitchy and nervous. Alessi is an acquired taste.

His tendencies toward measured abstraction are more pronounced on this album than on his first three ECM titles (*Baida*, *Quiver*, and *Imaginary Friends*, released between 2013 and 2019). Those records featured powerful aggressive sidemen who provided contrast to Alessi. *It's Always Now* has people who (like Alessi) teach at schools in Switzerland: Weber, bassist Bänz Oester, and drummer Gerry Hemingway. They reinforce the leader's introspection and academicism.

This quartet is best when it concentrates its lyricism into a deeply encompassing mood, like on "The Shadow Side" and "Old Baby."

It's Always Now is a classic example of a syndrome that infuses current jazz, often to its detriment: obsession with original composition. Alessi is a less-than-special composer who insists on writing all his own material. Given the originality and expertise of these four players, it could have been intriguing to hear them apply their unfamiliar mindsets to a few familiar tunes, from whatever genres, by special composers.

—THOMAS CONRAD

METTE HENRIETTE

Drifting

ECM

Mette Henriette doesn't play complex tenor saxophone melodies. Her lines most often go in the other direction, with simple lines and long tones executed with the crisp tone of a chamber musician. Documented by the unique approach to production by ECM mastermind Manfred Eicher, Henriette's sound might be austere, but it becomes vast as it echoes across the landscape like a siren call.

The Norwegian saxophonist's 2015 debut was a two-disc set made up largely of barely-there vignettes that flowed together to create an oddly beautiful chamber work. Like the first half of that album, *Drifting* is played by a trio: Henriette, returning pianist Johan Lindvall, and cellist Judith Hamann. The title of her sophomore effort comes from one of its tracks, but it aptly describes the whole performance. This is music with no climaxes, only endings. Henriette has said the work "is on its way somewhere, moving at its own pace." While that pace feels relaxed, the rich beauty of the sound keeps the music from plodding.

Lindvall often creates the structure, executing a syncopated chord pattern or a billowing line. It feels minimalist, but that description doesn't feel right when the melody of his line changes subtly as he proceeds. Henriette uses her skill at playing low growls in a whisper, with the results often coming across as musings in response to the piano. Hamann's performance often works the same way, with her cello coming in suddenly with

some colorful additions. Sometimes the trio prefers to simply breathe through the horn and toy with pedals and wood (the two-minute "0°"), but sometimes the suspense does resolve itself with rigid lines moving toward something more consonant ("Oversoar"). In both cases, *Drifting* has the power to soothe and absorb listeners.

—MIKE SHANLEY

SIMON MOULLIER

Isla

Self-produced

Simon Moullier has quickly ascended to the upper tier of the jazz vibraphone community. He made a serious impression with 2019's *Spirit Song* — a postmodern debut focusing on the quintet format while highlighting his writing, technical strengths, and varicolored improvisational language — and then went on to lead a resourceful trio through a program of customized standards on 2021's *Countdown*. Now, recalibrating his outlook, this New York-based mallet virtuoso fronts a tight quartet while crafting a broad concept of home and drawing on formative times as a seasider in his native France.

Working with pianist Lex Korten, bassist Alexander Claffy, and drummer Jongkuk Kim, Moullier manages to evoke imagery, memories, and emotions connected to an island existence off the coast of Brittany. The waltzing "Empress of the Sea" plays on the majesty and mystique of the waters. The charged title track extends on the idea of the unbound and unknown powers of nature. And "Enchantment," built atop Kim's stable rock lock, offers ample space to explore and closes with a vamping acknowledgment of time's seemingly altered state in this remote setting.

Moving back to the mainland, Moullier constructs new realities and finds a couple of hospitable and historical dwellings to make his own. An admitted connection to Radiohead rings true on the kaleidoscopic, drum-driven "This Dream." Movement and dynamism

help to define "Phoenix Eye." Lambent lines shine down and provide warmth on the Milton Nascimento-indebted "Heart." Standard "You Go to My Head" presents with light bolero touches and a few harmonic twists. And a sophisticated and soulful take on Mercer Ellington's infrequently covered "Moon Mist" finds the leader in a reflective space. While each track has its own charms, all eight come together to create a breathtaking panorama. Simon Moullier's supreme skills and painterly approach don't disappoint on Isla.

—DAN BILAWSKY

ROB MAZUREK + EXPLODING STAR ORCHESTRA

Lightning Dreamers

International Anthem

Composer, trumpeter, electronic instrumentalist, and self-proclaimed "interdisciplinary abstractivist" Rob Mazurek and his blurry Exploding Star Orchestra make a real mess on *Lightning Dreamers*. Not that you wouldn't expect the Chicago music maker—in league with co-producer and guitarist Jeff Parker—to distort every melody and rhythm and frizz every fuzztone available to them. That's been Mazurek's free-for-all, post-everything vibe ever since his 1990s with the Chicago Underground Duo.

Using an avant dream-team of keyboardists Craig Taborn and Angelica Sanchez, drummer Gerald Cleaver, flautist Nicole Mitchell, ever-present percussionist Mauricio Takara, and utility player/vocalist Damon Locks, *Lightning Dreamers* has a prismatic and chilling effect. Think

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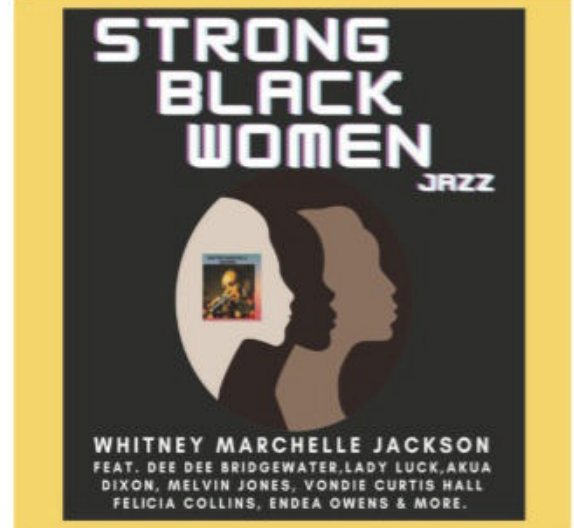


Vocalist and pianist Whitney Marchelle Jackson swings Beyonce's "Single Ladies". Pays homage to Nina Simone. Quotes from VP Kamala Harris, Former First Lady Michelle Obama, Maya Angelou, Abbey Lincoln. Strong Black Woman song arranged 8 different styles including; Jazz, Blues, rock, Hip hop, and classical.

EDITOR'S PICK

SARA CASWELL

The Way To You

Anzic

It's hard to believe that *The Way To You* is violinist Sara Caswell's first recording under her own name in 17 years. That long delay might have been because she's been otherwise occupied, what with teaching and recording and performing with her vocalist-sister Rachel Caswell (as the Caswell Sisters) — not to mention esperanza spalding, Henry Threadgill, Fred Hersch, Helen Sung, Brian Blade, Brad Mehldau, the group 9 Horses, and so many others.

This time out (her third), she's joined by her steady working group for much of the last decade, with guitarist Jesse Lewis, bassist Ike Sturm, and drummer Jared Schonig, along with guest vibraphonist Chris Dingman on four tracks. The textures and tonality are somewhat reminiscent of Zbigniew Seifert's collaboration with Oregon but with an emphasis on playful, gentle, or sorrowful melodies.

There's quite a cross-section of sounds and traditions on *The Way To You*. It's got a bit of Brazil, with tunes by Egberto Gismonti ("7 Anéis") and Antonio Carlos Jobim ("O Que Tinha De Ser"), whereas the title track uses her Norwegian hardanger d'amore fiddle with its five sympathetic strings beneath the fingerboard. There are straightforward nods to jazz (Kenny Barron's "Voyage" and Caswell's co-composition "Last Call," with its touch of guitar distortion). Then there's the beautiful "On My Way To You" and the indescribably lovely unaccompanied solo intro on "Warren's Way," which gives you some idea why so many top names have kept Sara Caswell so busy for the past 17 years.

—LARRY APPELBAUM

of first-album Lounge Lizards and *Agharta*-era electric Miles toying with the melodicism of a Donald Fagen (on "Future Shaman" and the twinkling "Shape Shifter") in dub.

For all its noisiness—its braying brass to its

electronic buzzes, clicks, and bloops on tracks like "Dream Sleeper"—there is an elegance to the interactivity within. Flautist Mitchell and pianists Taborn and Sanchez take a prominent role on "Black River," dueling among themselves before an unusually clamorous sample of an Exploding Star Orchestra gig in Paris from last year.

While "Black River" is the only track on the album where you just wish they would have looked in the mirror and removed the first thing they saw that stuck out (yeah, it's that crowded), its immediate follow-up and album closer "White River" is twilight-y spare, quiet, and rippling. Here, Cleaver's cascading cymbals and Parker's fractal guitar stammers and squeals appear at the tippy-top of Mazurek's snow-capped melody. A gorgeous, tonic dénouement to a banging, clanging work, this is the best and most diverse Mazurek that we've heard in some time.

—A.D. AMOROSI

DON ALIQUO

Growth

Ear Up

Don Aliquo leads a productive life as a performer and educator. The Pittsburgh native co-founded the jazz studies program at Middle Tennessee State University around the turn of the century. Along with visits to China and Colombia for teaching stints, he has also released several albums under his own name. If one album could increase the tenor saxophonist's reputation as a strong performer, album number eight, Growth, offers plenty of reasons.

The album captures Aliquo in the company of two different piano-less quartets. Three tracks feature two horns with bass and drums; the other switches the second horn for a guitar. Two different rhythm sections fire the musicians, pushing them to increased heights as they interact. But the band already has an advantage since Aliquo's eight originals contain some sharp melodic

contours that expand on a hard-swinging format. "Salt and Light" opens by going through a few different sections before the leader and trumpeter Rod McGaha cut loose, sounding liberated by the lack of a harmonic base. Bassist Jonathan Wires responds appropriately to the turns both horns make. Drummer Marcus Finnie adds increased velocity to Aliquo's playing in "Woman Clothed by the Sun."

For the second set, Aliquo plays up the angular quality of "Pedal Taverns" by overdubbing some bass clarinet, evoking Monk's "Brilliant Corners" just a bit. "For the Vulnerable" is all bass clarinet, starting rubato before heading into a strong groove. This time, Danny Gottlieb fires the music from behind the drums, providing greater nuance to bright tracks like "Blues for Duffy and Doug." With Steve Kovalcheck (guitar) and Jacob Jezioro (bass) completing this quartet, this grouping rivals the first as the ideal setting for Aliquo. Either way, the saxophonist can't miss.

—MIKE SHANLEY

FALKNER EVANS

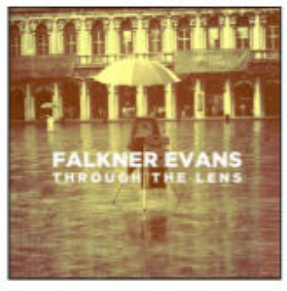
Through the Lens

Consolidated Artists Productions

Solo jazz piano is its own art form. There are many fine pianists who thrive in trios who should not play in public alone. The demands of turning a piano into an orchestra and providing all elements of melody and harmony and rhythm by oneself can be prohibitive.

Falkner Evans is an under-the-radar musician who sounds like he was born to play solo piano, even though he came to it late. He is from Tulsa, Oklahoma, but has long been based in New York, where he has made a few small ensemble recordings with strong collaborators like Matt Wilson, Cecil McBee, and Steve Nelson.

In 2021, Evans released a remarkable solo piano debut, *Invisible*



Words. It was a deeply moving eulogy for his wife Linda, who had taken her own life the previous year. *Through the Lens* is a sequel, but less a personal encounter with unspeakable tragedy than a meditation on loss and acceptance, made possible by the passage of time. It is a wholly improvised suite in five long movements. Evans has said, "It is vital to tap into a flow, whether playing free or written compositions." The flow here is a deep, sustained journey of memory, passing through profound darkness, searching for light. Evans marks out narratives of melody with extraordinary patience, but the slowness with which this music moves never feels ponderous. Evans' rapt concentration leads him to many manifestations of lyricism. Lines of thought take surprising turns. Digressions become new paths to discovery.

There is only one instrument capable of providing the solo jazz improviser with the means to create objective correlatives for the innermost tides of human emotion and the mysteries of consciousness itself. Those who love the piano would do well to seek out Falkner Evans.

—THOMAS CONRAD

WILLIAM CARN

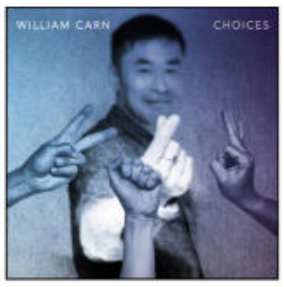
Choices

Self-produced

The music community, like the rest of the world, has been inching back toward what passed for normality before COVID-19. But the lingering impact of pandemic-imposed isolation remains the impetus behind a fair number of recording projects, including this concise statement from William Carn. Drawing inspiration from events that shaped the stretch of time between 2020 and 2022, the Toronto-based trombonist used remote recording strategies to assemble a collection of friends who help to enhance and amplify the central thrust of his compositions. In doing so, he demonstrates how technology encourages togetherness from a distance.

On "The Inertia of Complacency" — a spirited representation of the complain-yet-do-nothing type — Carn corrals tenor saxophonist Kelly Jefferson, trumpeter William Sperandei, keyboardist/producer HiFiLo (a.k.a. Todd Pentney) and drummer Ernesto Cervini. During "Heroyim Slava," translating as "Glory to the Heroes," he uses a valiant, overdubbed trombone ensemble;

HiFiLo's moving lines and textures; and Volodymyr Zelenskyy's words (about the price of freedom) to salute the brave Ukrainians fighting back against Russia's horrific assaults. Through "Get Up," adding Sperandei, alto saxophonist Jesse Ryan, and drummer Larnell Lewis to the equation, the trombonist delivers staunch techno-funk in tribute to those who protest against injustice. In a keys-focused "Goodbye Old Friend," he serves up a simple elegy to a feline companion. And with "The Gift," which finds drummer Davide



DiRenzo laying it down, Carn sings the praises of his wife, saxophonist Tara Davidson.

Bookending the album with two solo miniatures—"Breathe In" and "Breathe Out"—this leader leaves no doubt as to how things stood three years back and where he hopes they're heading now: The former deals in glacial uncertainty and the latter plays to hope, presenting a meditative atmosphere and gentle exhalations. With choices come opportunities, and William Carn tends to make the most of each one.

—DAN BILAWSKY

NO COSMOS

you iii everything else

Lighter Than Air

The new jam from trumpeter/electronic-ician Scott Bevins begins in something like an alien love cry, flips over to warped tones, ticks over on cymbal work from Kyle Hutchins (the only other performer on every cut), until something like a head melody emerges, split between Bevins' horn and Evan Shay's tenor. Soon enough, wordless singer Sarah Rossy jumps in with the dominant palate: She'll sound, over the course of the set, like she's talking to herself, arguing with herself, praying

to something bigger than herself, and limning anew that permeable membrane between personal ecstasy and mystical transcendence. Parts of this sound like techno, and parts of it threaten soft jazz — but only in small segments, as if the shifting ensemble dared you to settle in comfy, until an electronic spasm, like a shout, wakes you up.

Echo can enhance any profound sound — witness Ahn Phung's alto flute on the second cut, "Almost Lost You" — but the mix stays anchored in Hutchins' marching orders as he seems unconcerned with how wild and loose anyone else might threaten to be. I'm fond of the trumpet as it waxes sweet and to the point, but his Bevins electronics grant him command of the overall landscape, which always holds out some pitchbend glitching to it. That makes for cosmic riddles, just like some of the song titles ("0 to me to me to me"), that'll confuzzle but ultimately beg for a replay. Or, OK, since we're in the 21st century, a fresh click on that virtual play button.

—ANDREW HAMLIN

JESSE DAVIS

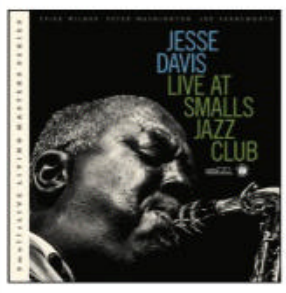
Live at Smalls Jazz Club

Cellar Music

Alto saxophonist Jesse Davis operates in the mainstream of bebop, where the currents of blues, swing, and soul run swift and deep. A New Orleans native taught by Ellis Marsalis, Davis recorded a half-dozen well-received albums on the Concord label during the 1990s and held down weekend gigs at Augie's (now Smoke) on the Upper West Side for many years during the same decade.

His profile has been lowered by a move more than 20 years ago to Italy, where he still lives with his wife and family. But this stateside return envelops him in a quartet that couldn't be more simpatico. Pianist/Small's owner Spike Wilner brings the ace, always in-demand bebop rhythm section from his own trio: drummer Joe Farnsworth and bassist Peter Washington. They gleefully go to work unearthing the vintage flavors and textures of three standards and five bop originals that were all composed before Davis was born in 1965.

Davis inevitably gets compared to Cannonball



Adderley (a high compliment), but his soulfulness is a little more subtle and his slalom runs of mashed notes slightly more daring or impulsive. That said, the quartet rarely leaves the bebop pocket, be it Jimmy Heath's classic "Gingerbread Boy," Lee Morgan's Latin-tinged "Ceora," or Monk's "Rhythm-A-Ning," which Davis prefers at a breakneck tempo. Horace Silver's "Juicy Lucy" swings with a strut, and the relatively obscure "Cup Bearers," written for Dizzy Gillespie's band, has got both a solid melody and plenty of room to blow. The standards enable Davis to showcase his balladry ("These Foolish Things," "Street of Dreams"). The set closes with an extended version of Cole Porter's "Love For Sale," a toe-tapping delight with effortlessly torrid solos, a parting reminder that there is a dude across the pond who can really play in that timeless bebop way.

—BRITT ROBSON

ALLISON ADAMS TUCKER

Retro Trilogy

Allegato Music

San Diego vocalist Allison Adams Tucker has taken her sweet time releasing new recordings, but with her new project, *Retro Music*, she's throwing caution to the wind. An album that compiles three distinct six-song EPs, it's only her fourth release since her 2008 debut *Come With Me*. Tracing the evolution of her taste in popular music across three decades, *Retro Trilogy* is a neat concept that strikes home by highlighting what made the original versions memorable, with settings that gild Tucker's translucent, inviting vocals. Working with producer Matt Pierson and an enviable cast of players, including guitarist and longtime San Diego compadre Peter Sprague, guitarist Yotam Silberstein, Tony Scherr on bass and guitar, Kenny Wollesen on drums and vibes, and Kevin Hays on piano, Fender Rhodes, and melodica, Tucker finds a personal path into just about every piece.

The journey starts with *1977*, and part of the fun is watching how she and her team reshape familiar songs

like Queen's "You're My Best Friend" and ELO's "Mr. Blue Sky," which she distills down to a bright, sunny essence. Tucker doesn't neglect her reputation as a skilled polyglot, embracing Bowie's "Life on Mars" in Portuguese, a la Seu Jorge.

With 1988, her ear has grown, and the selections are more idiosyncratic. She's at her best when the songs generate their own narrative momentum, like Prince's "Sometimes It Snows in April" and Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time." The concluding chapter 1999 is the most eclectic and effective, as Tucker turns Annie Lennox's "Why" into a torch song while letting her freak flag fly with They Might Be Giants' "Birdhouse In Your Soul."

Less a musical diary than a memoir written for a younger self with sympathy and intelligence, *Retro Trilogy* makes for revelatory listening whether or not you happened to be around.

—ANDREW GILBERT

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Live Bass

Where risks are taken, and magic happens, on the low end

BY LINDA MAY HAN OH

It's in live settings that we hear this music really unfold, develop, and cook. I love those risks that happen in live and improvised music, and the way the audience feels the energy and the rewards of those risks makes it hard to recapture in the studio. The bass is no exception, even though a lot of what the instrument does is the underlying stuff that maybe not everybody notices. This list of recordings highlights that stuff and includes a range of different musicians, eras, and venues.

Charles Mingus
"Sophisticated Lady"

Charles Mingus – *Cornell 1964* (Blue Note, 2007 [originally recorded March 18, 1964])

This is one of my favorite records. It's such a phenomenal band. On this "Sophisticated Lady" with just Mingus and pianist Jaki Byard, the time, the facility, the authority, the melody are all so strong. There are times when it sounds like he's playing the bass like a piano. Partway through the song, he goes super high up, to this almost unreachable place at the end of the fingerboard—an example of the contrary motion lines Mingus often played.

Robert Hurst
"Chambers of Tain"

Wynton Marsalis – *Live at Blues Alley* (Columbia, 1987)

I'm a huge fan of Robert Hurst, and this music is iconic for my development and that of any musicians of my age. The sound is ferocious. Robert doesn't solo, but just in holding it down as he does, there's an element of danger: It's this ocean of sound, and things are bubbling up and bubbling up, and when is this wave going to crash? He's just plowing through it all, super solid with that bounce to the beat in the walking lines. That's a lot of heavy lifting right there.

Thomas Morgan
"Dozens"

Miles Okazaki – *Figurations* (Pi, 2012)

Thomas is a master of making melodies and has a beautiful sound. This song is essentially rhythm changes, but it is a tricky rhythmic sequence that becomes shorter throughout the form and then expands again, and Thomas is just right there hanging on, Then, when it comes to the release point, about two-and-a-half minutes in at the bridge, dancing around the form—dancing between those rhythmic motifs and a more traditional way of comping.

Scott LaFaro
"Gloria's Step" (Take 3)

Bill Evans – *Sunday at the Village Vanguard* (Riverside, 1961)

This one is an obvious choice, for many reasons. What Scott LaFaro does on this is incredible, especially for the time—and he was only 25 years old! The interplay with Bill Evans and [drummer] Paul Motian is just so agile: those dancing triplets, the strumming. Take 2 is also on the album, and I really love that one. But there's something about Take 3: He's warmed up, taking more risks, playing a lot more polyrhythmically. And then his solo is beautiful, referencing the melody: he knows the tune inside out and he's able to be free with it.

esperanza spalding
"Endangered Species"

Wayne Shorter, Terri Lyne Carrington, Leo Genovese, esperanza spalding – *Live at the Detroit Jazz Festival* (Mack Avenue, 2022)

esperanza starts off the song with this conversational interplay with Terri Lyne [on drums], and you can hear she's really going for it. Sometimes she displaces it, plays around with it; sometimes she resolves on the one, sometimes the two or the full end. She keeps it exciting and interesting, and there's a constant dialogue within the cracks that's really beautiful. Just the bass playing itself is esperanza at her best, let alone what she's singing with the melody. It's super grooving.

Ron Carter
"If I Were A Bell"

Miles Davis – *The Complete Live at the Plugged Nickel* (Legacy, 1995)

Another obvious, iconic choice: Mr. Ron Carter. The solidity, the pulse, the sound, and the chemistry between him, Tony Williams, and Herbie Hancock. When he wants to slip in and out of the cracks, it's really slick. In that handoff between Miles's solo and Wayne Shorter's, there's a moment Tony and Ron slip into this sort of alternate quarter-note pulse just for a quick second, and then bang, back into the form. There's so much risk-taking and trust involved.

Derrick Hodge
"Resting Warrior"

R + R = NOW – *Live* (Blue Note, 2021)

This track is such an interesting groove, such a beautiful groove, and the connection with Justin Tyson is just so strong. He keeps the groove solid, but then there's one bit where he switches from the bass line to the melody. I love it when bass players acknowledge the melody, or play in a way that's supportive of the melody. Sometimes it's easy for bass players for people to just sort of come in and play their rhythm-section role—but their role is to acknowledge the rest of the song too. ***JT***

[As told to Michael J. West.]

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